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## DURHAM ANTHROPOLOGY: A PROVINCIAL HISTORY OF A PROVISIONAL DISCIPLINE.

**ABSTRACT:** A history of anthropology in the Northumbrian region of England from the early Christian era, through the age of exploration and subsequent period of industrialisation, to the twentieth century. Focussing on the various anthropological strands in the region's long tradition of scholarship, the paper traces the disciplines' shifting provisional identity from a provincial perspective and eventual representation at Durham university in a department of anthropology.

**KEYWORDS:** NE England, medieval to 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century anthropology.

The early history of Durham Anthropology parallels that of the University in its virtuality. The city has been a centre of learning since the monks of Lindisfarne, fleeing Viking harassment, arrived on the peninsula of Dun Holm ('Hill Island' in Old English) in 995AD carrying Saint Cuthbert's coffin and the Lindisfarne Gospels (one of the world's greatest literary treasures). Subsequently, from the time of Aldhun, Durham's first Bishop,<sup>1</sup> the Wear River promontory has been home to a scholarly community that was a forerunner to the modern university. But the city's provincial location hindered its early advancement to a university. Although a centre of medieval English scholarship, the cathedral authorities opted in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century to found Durham Hall (later College) in Oxford for the education of scholars from the Durham Benedictine community (Fowler 1904:1-13; Whiting 1932:15-16).<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the tradition of scholarship and teaching subsequently prompted attempts to found a university locally. There were plans to establish a Durham College when Henry VIII dissolved religious houses, but they finally led only to the re-founding of Bishop Langley's Grammar School with 'King's Scholars', its buildings on Palace Green now part of the University's estate. And during the Commonwealth in the mid 1600s Cromwell's Privy Council approved the foundation of a Durham College with a provost, fellows (including professors) and scholars in the monastery's outer court, still called the College today, but Oxbridge resistance to it having degree conferring authority led to the College's stymieing with the monarchy's restoration (Fowler 1904:13-21; Whiting 1932:16-29).

*Dark Ages to Age of Discovery.*

It may be stretching things to suggest that we identify the Venerable Bede, writing in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, as Durham's first anthropologist or, following on in a similar tradition, Symeon reporting in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as an ethnographer (Rollason 2000). After all Bede is widely cited as England's first historian. Nonetheless, it jives with anthropology's provisional character, some arguing that it is a sub-discipline of history after all. Both disciplines deal with cultural issues. These Medieval authors drew on local oral traditions in their accounts about people and places, and we might cite this as an early example of 'anthropology at home'. The record of legends comprises an early discussion of myths that give a fascinating insight into Medieval beliefs, such as Bede's account of soil from where Saint Oswald, King of Northumbria, was slain being mixed with water to cure various ailments, which was a conviction so popular that a ditch "as deep as a man's height" was excavated there (Bede 1969:242-43; McNamara 1994:64). He also recounts Saint Aidan blessing Oswald's arm (Bede 1969:230-31), subsequently severed after battle, which Symeon reports a fellow monk had seen when it was a vied-for missing relic believed to have

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<sup>1</sup> And father-in-law of Uchtred the Anglo-Saxon Earl who oversaw the building of the first minister – forerunner of today's cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently incorporated into today's Trinity College, where Durham Quad contains the remaining parts of Durham College (University College and Balliol College were also founded from Durham).

powerful healing powers (Rollason 2000:23-24). The silver-enshrined severed arm reportedly remained incorrupt and such accounts of power attributed to holy relics foreshadow Frazer's sympathetic magic by a millennium.

These monk authors give ethnographic information on inheritance rules and land holdings, Bede referring several times to the 'hide', an area needed to support a peasant family (Brooks 1999:10), and Symeon recording Durham's landed possessions. Bede discusses the medieval view of the cosmos and time, focussing on the calculation of the Easter date.<sup>3</sup> And both give early accounts of ethnic identity, which Bede associates with language, distinguishing between Angles, Saxons and Jutes among others (Bede 1969:50-51; Hines 1994:50-51). He envisages Christianity giving the *gens Anglorum* 'inhabitants of England' an emerging sense of cultural unity<sup>4</sup> -- 'English ethnogenesis' (Brooks 1999:1) with a common history-cum-origin-myth. It is a theme picked up subsequently by King Alfred in promoting his rule of the *Angelcynn* 'English'; he sensed that one Church might prefigure the union of disparate groups under a single political authority, using Bede to justify historically his ambitions.<sup>5</sup> "In anthropological terms this might be called an instrumental ethnicity, a group identity based on the political circumstances . . . he invented an English community, implanting into the minds of his people a personal and cultural feeling of belonging to the Angelcynn . . . Alfred presented his subjects with an idea partly shaped by Bede" (Foot 1996: 36). The epic history of Christian missionaries triumphing over heathens in hazardous political circumstances and the coming together of several tribes into a proto-state is arguably an early example of cultural evolution, and possibly also of academic impact on wider events.

It is more usual to date the nascent emergence of anthropology centuries later with European exploration of the world and contact with markedly different cultures. In this respect, Thomas Harriot (1560-1621) merits a mention, as a pensioner of the 9th Earl of Northumberland, who deeded him property in Durham and gave him accommodation in his London house – albeit as a consequence he was caught up briefly in the Gunpowder Plot in which one of the Earl's relatives was a conspirator. A mutual friend, Walter Raleigh, introduced Harriot, who lodged with Raleigh for a period in Durham House,<sup>6</sup> to two Algonquin Indians called Wanchese and Manteo, brought to England from North America. During their stay they all resided in Durham House and Harriot was delegated to spend time with them learning about Algonquian life and language, inventing a phonetic alphabet to transcribe words, gathering intelligence that might be useful to English colonists. Subsequently, a voyage to North Carolina, where he furthered his understanding of the language, such that he could communicate to some extent with people directly. His 1588 account of the expedition, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, contains ethnographic information on the Algonquin speakers living there, one of the earliest, and today classic, accounts of an American population. His report, in the context of the times, was largely sympathetic to Algonquin ways – albeit he notes that the natives needed to be "brought to civility" and taught to embrace "true religion" – but the majority of explorers and colonists were uninterested in the *Report*, regarding the natives as soulless subhuman savages hindering their access to the region's exploitable natural resources. A famous

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<sup>3</sup> Before Bede's work on the calendar the Church had much difficulty in calculating the dates of church festivals, particularly Eastertide. We also owe Bede for the AD and BC convention of dating events, in adopting Christ's Incarnation as his baseline to standardise the haphazard dates used previously according to kings' reigns (Brooks 1999: 4-5).

<sup>4</sup> Seeing the English as one of God's chosen peoples with *Britannia* their promised land (Brooks 1999:2-4).

<sup>5</sup> According to one scholarly authority "we should not think of ourselves as 'English' today had Bede not written *Ecclesiastical History* . . . the powerful expression of a common history . . . provided a national church with a national agenda and with a clear ethnic terminology" (Brooks 1999:22).

<sup>6</sup> Durham House on the Strand, built in 1345, was the London home of the Bishops of Durham, until confiscated by Henry VIII during the dissolution.

explorer from the north-east, who contributed to the ethnographic record, was James Cook (1728-1779), who grew up on a farm south of Durham, adjacent to Roseberry Topping and went to school in Great Ayton, who learnt to navigate on barques transporting coal from Newcastle to London. During three voyages to the Pacific in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century he not only mapped large parts of the region but he was the first European to discover some Polynesian Islands and leave us an account of some of their customs in his logs, which together with the accounts of others who accompanied him and many valuable drawings, comprise today valuable records of Polynesian life.<sup>7</sup> The voyagers also returned with considerable numbers of artefacts, a few of which comprise priceless objects today in some of our region's museums. There are some, for instance, in the Great North Museum: Hancock,<sup>8</sup> including a Maori paddle collected on Cook's first voyage.<sup>9</sup> And recently a unique *hei tiki* pendant, apparently of human skull bone, has been rediscovered in the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle, together with some other unusual greenstone Māori pendants and a sea snail shell on a braided hair cord, all traceable to James Roberts who served as Joseph Banks's servant on the *Endeavour* voyage (Jessop 2015). While the attitudes of explorers to the people they encountered had become somewhat more humane in the intervening two centuries, some of Cook's observations did little to improve then prevalent ethnocentric judgements of the primitive. He was apparently oblivious, reflecting general unawareness of his age, to other cultural values and approaches to social relations and common property. He depicts the Polynesians as sexually promiscuous and inveterate thieves, stealing anything they could from his ship. Albeit his untimely death at the hands of Hawaiians on Kealakekua Bay beach, which featured such misunderstanding of property relations with Cook responding violently to some men taking a small boat, did far more to further the savage image than his writing!

It is necessary to remember that this was the time when slavery was still condoned by society, although growing numbers were campaigning against it. Indeed the discipline of anthropology owes its origins in part to the fight to abolish the slave trade. Today's Royal Anthropological Institute, for instance, can trace its origins, via the Aborigines Protection Society (founded 1837), to the abolition of slavery movement (Stocking 1971). A notable abolitionist was Granville Sharp (1735-1813), Durham born and raised, a founder and first chairman in 1787 of the 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade', England's first abolitionist organisation. His plan to settle freed London slaves in West Africa contributed to the founding of Freetown in Sierra Leone in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was in the eponymous Granville Town quarter that the Church Missionary Society established West Africa's first university college in 1827, to train missionaries and teachers to proselytize in the region. By a fascinating twist of fate the institution, Fourah Bay College, was subsequently affiliated in 1876 to Durham University for nearly a century to authorise academically its degree awarding powers (Whiting 1932:300-306). At the other end of the slave trade route, in Barbados, there is Codrington College, opened in 1745, offering a

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<sup>7</sup> The Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society elected Joseph Banks, who sailed on the first voyage as Scientist, to Honorary Membership in 1796. And the year previously, the Society elected as Members William Wales, who sailed on the second voyage as Astronomer, and George Dixon, who sailed on the third voyage as Armourer (Jessop nd.b.).

<sup>8</sup> The Museum has long had close connections with the University. Its ethnographic collections date back to 1793, the time of the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society's foundation, which have since gradually expanded (and contracted) with several significant donations of ethnographic materials (Jessop *et al.* 1998:ii-xi). The 'curiosities' of the Hancock family comprise some of the early ethnographic artefacts held by the Museum and include a sample book of barkcloth acquired on Captain Cook's second voyage, a carved Maori adze, ivory ornaments and carved wooden boxes (Jessop nd.a.).

<sup>9</sup> Drawn by Sydney Parkinson, the voyage's artist, original drawing in the British Library – Jessop *et al.* 1998:vii, plate D.

general education initially and subsequently training ordinands for the Anglican church, which in 1875 also became affiliated to Durham University; a connection that continues to this day (Whiting 1932:293-300). The slave trade persisted long after abolition; for instance, some British chocolate companies sent Joseph Burt to investigate the Angolan slave trade in 1905 (report in the Natural History Society of Northumbria library), and his relative Edmund Burt, who was Reader in Entomology at King's College for thirty years, donated a collection of his African artefacts to the Hancock Museum,<sup>10</sup> including a wooden slave shackle (Jessop nd.a.).

*Missionary and military ethnographers.*

The University of Durham finally became a chartered reality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the Social Reform Act (Fowler 1904). Its foundation reflected the spirit of that landmark legislation that reformed the country's corrupt form of government -- dominated by aristocratic and wealthy interests and epitomised in the 'rotten boroughs' that made a mockery of any pretence at an electoral process<sup>11</sup> -- and it broke the Oxbridge stranglehold on university education in England that had similarly become largely moribund. The Church was under attack for its wealth, and Durham Cathedral, amongst the wealthiest, saw a way to deflect criticism and the threat of secular appropriation of its assets by building on its long history of involvement in education by founding an association with a higher learning institution, long in demand in the north of England. Those who lobbied for an Act to authorise the transfer of assets from the Church to establish a university, however, would not recognise today's institution, or the disciplines it supports, including anthropology. A letter from Canon Thomas Gaisford to Archdeacon Charles Thorp on appropriate subjects states that "above all things essentials (divinity, ancient languages, mathematics and natural philosophy) should be first attended to, the numerous tribe of hodiernal sciences with names terminating in ogy are non essentials and excrescences - they are amusing and instructive (to a certain degree) but are not wholesome discipline for the mind - are more suitable to the dilettante than the sober student".<sup>12</sup>

The attitude of the university authorities regarding the subsequent affiliation of the African and Caribbean colleges testifies to more open-minded attitudes, indeed forward thinking for their times. The British Bishop of Sierra Leone, for instance, was appalled at a campaign to establish 'a godless West African University' (Lynch 1964: 406), and was only mollified with a compromise that affiliated the fledgling African higher education institution to a reputable British university with sound Anglican credentials (Andrews 2012b). But the University's agreement to an affiliation was unpopular in some quarters with purportedly 'a London newspaper, criticising the action of the Senate, ... that the next step would probably be the affiliation of the Zoo' (Whiting 1932: 306). The University's more positive attitude is evident in the Sub-Warden's comments on the first graduates that 'these students were pure Negroes, and this ... spoke well for civilisation and Christianity in Central Africa' (Andrews 2012a:7). Other affiliations were nearer to home and particularly significant for the subsequent development of anthropology in the University. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, the Medical School became a college of Durham University in 1852, followed by the College of Physical Sciences in 1871 (subsequently renamed Armstrong College in 1904, after the Tyneside Victorian industrialist). Both of them later merged to form King's College, a Division of Durham University until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the emergence of

<sup>10</sup> Now the Great North Museum: Hancock, see footnote 7.

<sup>11</sup> The Prime Minister was Earl Grey a Northumbrian aristocrat whose Whig Government not only pushed through the 1832 Reform Act but also the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act that stopped slavery in Britain and her colonies -- a Durham college is named after Grey (as is the bergamot oil flavoured Earl Grey tea which he is accredited with introducing to the country).

<sup>12</sup> From a letter in the University's archive.

anthropology as a discipline was still many decades away. Noteworthy in this context is that medically trained persons were among some of the first ethnographers. One such person was Surgeon Rear-Admiral Daniel McNabb who trained at the Durham Medical School and published a brief communication on diseases of the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) in the Anthropological Institute's journal (McNabb 1894), and gave a collection of several Vanuatuan artefacts to the Hancock Museum, including a life-size *rambaramp* memorial statue topped with a man's clay-over-modelled skull that continues to fascinate visitors to the museum as it has for over a century (Jessop *et al.* 1998:viii).

The sending of Christian missionaries to convert and civilise populations was a common response to the widely perceived pagan and savage ways of populations contacted around the world. Some of them lived in remote regions for extended periods and acquired some knowledge of, even formed some sympathy for, local ways and have left valuable contributions to the ethnographic record; as Frank Jevons, master of Hatfield Hall (subsequently College), acknowledged in his evolutionary account of religious beliefs, discussed further below: "The labour which missionaries have bestowed on the study of native religions . . . provides most of the material for the history of early forms of religion" (1896: 6). One such missionary-cum-ethnographer was George Brown (1835-1917), who was born and educated in County Durham,<sup>13</sup> ran away to sea in his teens and via a missionary relative in New Zealand went to proselytise in the Pacific region where he resided for over two decades, working for the Methodist Mission on the islands of Samoa, New Britain and New Ireland (Carrington 1986; Gardner 2000, 2006; Reeson 2013; Rubel and Rosman 1996). He contributed to scholarly discussions in the emerging field of anthropology and published a substantial book on Melanesia and Polynesia, which contains invaluable ethnographic data on no longer extant cultural ways. The Royal Anthropological Institute's *Notes & Queries* (Brown 1910:vi) informed his enquires, which subdued his missionary perspective and led him to adopt a certain relativism and discuss practices within wider cultural context in "placing on record some of the knowledge of the manners, customs, and folklore of the peoples" (1910:vii). Nonetheless, contemporary evolutionary views coloured his account, arguing for instance that Fiji is more advanced than New Guinea for having replaced matrilineal descent with patrilineal descent, which supposedly facilitated the emergence of chiefly offices (1910:40).

Brown also amassed an extensive and valuable collection of photographs and artefacts (Davis 1985), and it is via the latter that he has a direct association with the Durham Department of Anthropology. Following his death, and some wrangling over his will, the Bowes Museum in Brown's home town of Barnard Castle purchased his ethnographic collection.<sup>14</sup> But the Museum had little use for it, as a fine arts institution, and many of the objects remained stored in boxes, until 1953 when the University of Durham purchased the collection for Anthropology Department teaching purposes, following which some of the artefacts were subsequently displayed in the Hancock Museum (Gardner 2006). The University of Newcastle on Tyne, which had possession of the collection following the division of Durham University into two institutions in the mid 1960s, had no anthropology department, and under purported financial duress due to government cuts of higher education budgets, viewed the collection as a disposable asset and decided to sell it.<sup>15</sup> In 1986 the

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<sup>13</sup> At a private school not far from the Bowes Academy that served as the inspiration for Dotheboys Hall in Charles Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* novel.

<sup>14</sup> The George Brown Collection comprises over 3,000 objects from Oceania, some of them unique heritage pieces.

<sup>15</sup> The vice-chancellor of the University of Newcastle said that the University would invest the money raised in funding research, and give priority to work in the Pacific region, but when I approached the University, with

National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka purchased the collection amongst considerable controversy. The curatorial staff at the Hancock Museum, together with some of us from the Durham Anthropology Department and the Royal Anthropological Institute put up a spirited fight against the sale (Benthall 1986; Specht 1987; Jessup, Starkey and Sillitoe 1998:x-xi).<sup>16</sup> We pointed out that Brown's will specified the North-East of England as home for his collection and that if Newcastle University was going to ignore the terms of his legacy, the only way that it could do so and maintain any shred of moral integrity was to transfer the collection back to the Pacific region, such as to the National Museum in Papua New Guinea, country of origin of the majority of objects.<sup>17</sup>

In view of Durham's long tradition of theological scholarship and teaching, it was inevitable that some of the University's graduates would serve as missionaries, although few would show any interest in documenting the cultural heritage of those they sought to convert. One exception was George T. Basden<sup>18</sup> who went in 1900 to work as an Anglican missionary in south-east Nigeria, where he stayed with the Niger Mission of the Church Missionary Society at Awka for thirty-five years, latterly serving as Archdeacon of Onitsha. He formed a keen interest in the welfare of the Igbo and in 1931 agreed to act on the Nigerian Legislative Council as their representative, a patriarchal colonial gesture maybe but we should not condemn him for being a person of his times. He illustrates the complex changing relations between missionary ethnographers and academic anthropologists in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (van den Bersselaar 2012). His two large volumes on the Igbo people became standard works (Basden 1921, 1938),<sup>19</sup> consulted widely by colonial officers and cited in anthropological works on the region, even though he subscribed to increasingly dated evolutionary ideas -- arguing for affinities between Igbo and Semitic cultures with "certain customs" pointing to "Levitic influence at a more or less remote period", notably the practices of sacrifice and circumcision, and a language that "bears several interesting parallels with Hebrew idioms" (Basden 1921:31).<sup>20</sup>

The fund of ethnographic data he collected on many now long-ceased cultural ways ensures his work's enduring significance. His comprehensive accounts of Igbo culture encompass livelihood, notably yam and palm cultivation; craft work and sexual division of tasks and trade; the lifecycle from childhood through courtship and marriage to burial and associated ceremonies; the politics of chieftainship and secret societies, and dispute settlement; myths, music and pastimes; and religious beliefs and practices, including

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which I had associations through the Faculty of Agriculture, about funding work in Papua New Guinea, it dismissed my enquiry out of hand.

<sup>16</sup> It was not the first time that disregard has been shown for museum collections in the north-east and valuable assets sold off. In 1977 the University of Durham sold a great auk that comprised one of the foundational objects of the University Museum (see later), donated by the Reverend Gisborne who purchased it for £5 in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Whiting 1932:286-87; Hale 2016:38, 210-11). The University sold the bird for £4,200, and the purchaser resold it to Glasgow Museums for £30,000 sixteen years later "demonstrating the rashness of the sale by Durham University authorities" (Hale 2016:211); in financial terms that is, leaving aside intellectual costs. And such sales of our heritage continue, the University having lately sold off wonderful Georgian properties (one of which the Anthropology Department occupied until recently) together with a classic Victorian redbrick civic building, again at knockdown prices.

<sup>17</sup> Another issue was the potential breaking up of the collection due to British law putting a limit on the value of objects that can be sold overseas without being offered to British institutions first, which resulted in the British Museum securing some highly valued and ethnographically significant objects.

<sup>18</sup> He graduated with a B.A. and M.A., and later in 1925 was awarded an honorary Litt. D. for his work.

<sup>19</sup> The second volume covers similar ground to the previous one, in places more or less verbatim, but in considerably more detail, and is more overtly concerned about the demise of Igbo culture.

<sup>20</sup> See also chapter in 1938 *Niger Ibos* 'Some similarities between the Israelites and Ibos' and his nod, in discussing Igbo belief in the *Chukwu* Supreme Being, towards the old degeneration view that the distant ancestors of the Igbo were monotheistic.

sacrifice, divination and rites to cure illnesses. His discussion of slavery in *Among the Ibos* provides valuable information on indigenous attitudes to the region's long tradition of slave trading that predates European large-scale 'marketization' of the practice. The title of the chapter 'Polygamy and Slavery' indicates his early judgemental views of polygynous marriage. Nonetheless, he developed a deep regard for the region's Igbo speakers; recounting his arrival in a village, for instance, he comments that: "the chief would indicate that kola nut should be brought and once this was shared we were quickly on friendly terms. The Ibo is very hospitable, and many of the chiefs are nature's gentlemen" (Basden 1921:43).

Over time his publications evidence a change in his attitudes. His first publication -- largely a physical description of the Igbo population (physiognomy, skin colour, tattooing, dress etc.) and their country (geography, landscape vegetation etc.) -- has a scientific tenor, as does a subsequent one in the same journal (Basden 1912 and 1925). But his first book has a more informal ethnography-cum-travelogue quality, larded with anecdotes and moral commentary, such as "polygamy is a deadly evil, blighting to the mind, degrading to the body" (Basden 1921:102). The tone of his second larger book is more scholarly and objective, with more circumspect discussion, for instance of polygamy, pointing out that the "custom is . . . by no means a one-sided affair with the advantage on the side of the men-folk . . . it is not uncommon to find that women are stout protagonists of the practice" (Basden 1938:228). This reflects in part his conflicted attitudes about the contribution of missionary activities and colonial rule to changing peoples' lives -- to which he inevitably subscribed, particularly early on, commenting approvingly in his first publication that "the savage customs of cannibalism, human sacrifice, infanticide, etc., are being gradually swept away . . . [and] a new civilisation is springing up" (Basden 1912:247). Later however, he worried about the resulting destruction of Igbo institutions, which his ethnographic endeavours sought to counter in some measure -- as he makes clear in his last book, the aim of which was "to preserve some knowledge of old customs, beliefs and practices" (Basden 1938:xvi).

His changing views also reflect his response to some scalding interaction with anthropologists. As occurred, for instance, at the first International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in 1934, which he attended as the Church Missionary Society's representative,<sup>21</sup> subsequently complaining to the Society about the hostile criticism of missionaries that he encountered. He repeatedly stressed the time he had spent living in the Igbo region, which would have further offended anthropologists who advocate extended fieldwork but came nowhere near matching him. Regardless of the depth of his ethnographic enquiries, they remained marginal in the anthropological world, indeed largely unknown, due partly to Basden's markedly provincial status, spending most of his career in the Niger region. The irony is that one can spend too long in the field, distant from academic metropolises, when anthropology rightly lauds fieldwork! At the time that Malinowski first stressed the significance of field research, for instance, Basden observed, in discussing religious belief, that "unless unlimited time and patience can be devoted to the subject, together with much cross-questioning, backed by continual observation, no European can ever fathom the depths of the native mind" (Basden 1921: 211).

Furthermore Basden was a modest person who honestly acknowledged the shortcomings of his work: "it would be an unwarrantable presumption to be positive about anything herein written which treats of actual native law and custom . . . [with] innumerable ramifications which I have been unable to follow, and a vast amount upon which, were I directly questioned, I should have to say, "I don't know". The more one investigates, the more one realises the extreme profundity of native thought" (1938:xviii). It put him at a

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<sup>21</sup> Reading a paper on the scope of integrating Christianity with Igbo beliefs (notably the existence of a supreme Being called *Chukwu*, priests able to invoke spirits into material existence, the 'coming out' of mothers and children's naming customs (Basden 1934)).



further disadvantage faced by the casuistry of self-confident superior academics, albeit the weaknesses he identified were, and are, common to all anthropological work, as the postmodern turn now affirms. Elsewhere his work foretells of other contemporary concerns, such as: a person may do “the most extraordinary things and cannot explain why he does them . . . not controlled by logic; he is the victim of circumstance” (1921: 9), which could pass as a phenomenological comment on tacit knowledge. Likewise his observation of women, widely “regarded as inferior creatures” whereas “in daily life they hold a strongly entrenched position, the key of which is food. . . a married woman holds the whip hand over her husband by means of this vital weapon” (1921:100), which intimates the sentiment of current post-feminist revisionism.

Another way to bring civilisation to savage populations, particularly where they resisted colonial domination, was to send in the military. The Māori were such a population. The Durham (68th) Regiment of Foot (later the Durham Light Infantry) arrived in New Zealand in 1863 as part of a British force sent to subdue the Bay of Plenty region. Predictably, ethnographers were uncommon among the military, too busy forcefully subduing people, but a young Lieutenant Horatio Robley (1840-1930), a talented artist, took an interest in Maori life, and produced a series of valuable sketches and paintings of the local community. In between military duties (such as the battles of Pukehinahina and Te Rangaranga and pursuit of the Hau Hau resistance that killed a missionary and ship’s crew), he spent time with the Māori of the Tauranga region, adopted the name ‘Te Ropere’ and took up with Harete Mauao (a Matapihi woman) with whom he fathered Hamiora, a son (with descendants in Aotearoa today).<sup>22</sup> The art of the Maori captured his interest, particularly their tattooing tradition. On retirement as a major-general, Robley turned to ethnographic interests, publishing *Moko* in 1896, a book on Maori *moko* ‘tattoo’ that is a classic today.<sup>23</sup> A considerable part of the book concerns *mokomokai* ‘preserved heads’ that bear tattoos, and Robley amassed a collection of such heads, largely from seafarers, together with other Māori objects, which he exhibited and spoke about at various venues in the 1890s including the Royal Anthropological Institute (Robley 1897), London’s Guildhall and Liverpool Museum (Walker 2007:56). Similar to many colonial-ethnographers, his work is largely descriptive, leaving us with a valuable record of past ways, which is just as well because when he ventures onto theoretical interests of his day, notably diffusion (that invited exaggerated leaps of imagination), his ideas verge on the bizarre. The injunction of Moses that Jews should not slash their bodies in grief, as the Māori did, prompted the tribe of their ancestors, he suggests, to migrate to the Pacific by way of Burma,<sup>24</sup> where figures of the Buddha so impressed them that they reproduced these in their *tiki* figures (Walker 2007 84-86).

Another Māori ethnographer was John White from Cockfield village County Durham whose family emigrated to New Zealand in 1835 when he was nine years of age. Mixing with the Māori community he learnt the language and subsequently became an interpreter, on occasion translating for the military, although largely employed in land negotiations between Māori people and various colonial interests (Reilly 2014). During his work he collected accounts of Māori traditions and myths, an interest sparked partly through reading the *Poems of Ossian*, the purported translation of a Dark Age Gaelic epic poem cycle (Macpherson 1796). His reputation as an ethnographer grew with his publications on Māori customs (White 1861, 1874, 1878) and after four years as editor of the Maori newspaper *Te Wananga*, the government commissioned him to compile an official Māori history. The work took over

<sup>22</sup> It is likely that the boy was born after Robley left Aotearoa and he was unaware of his existence for many years (Walker 2007:41-42).

<sup>23</sup> He also published a slimmer volume on Maori greenstone objects – Robley 1915.

<sup>24</sup> Before arriving in New Zealand, Robley was posted to Burma and the sketches he made there featured in the encyclopaedic volume *The races of mankind* (1873, P. & J. Cassell).

a decade and, even incomplete at his death, ran to six volumes (White 1887-90). His approach was wide ranging and he collected ethnographic data from many tribes on various practices and beliefs together with genealogies, sayings and songs, legendary and historical traditions. While he is criticised for his disorganised approach, his notation and numbering being inconsistent, and his methods sometimes dubious and the sources of his information unclear, his achievements are impressive, particularly as a largely self-educated person, and his work is a valuable source of information on now defunct Māori ways. And as an ethno-historical novelist (White 1874, 1940), he made surprisingly contemporary-looking contributions to literature about the Māori, writing fictional accounts that combine ethnographic data, intended to popularise Māori traditions; as he notes in the foreword of *Te Rou* “Though woven together in the form of a tale . . . The present volume . . . exhibits truthfully the everyday life, habits and character of the pre-civilisation Maori; and as such may be accepted by scientific men”.

*The Victorian Evolutionists.*

Those interested, at this time, in today’s cognate disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, geography and biology scarcely distinguished between themselves, drawing freely on evidence from all these fields as suited their enquiries into humanity. In speculating on the evolution and diffusion of culture, for instance, they readily turned to contemporary ethnographic accounts, such as those on North American peoples, to illuminate the archaeological evidence (Orme 1981:2-15); a practice that continues with ethno-archaeological analogy (Van Reybrouck 2012). The eclectic collections of the early public museums epitomise the approach, following on from the miscellaneous displays of private cabinets of curiosities. The University Museum established in the Old Fulling Mill below Durham cathedral in 1833<sup>25</sup> – England’s second university museum<sup>26</sup> -- boasted such a collection of foreign curios, archaeological finds and natural history exhibits, including Chinese slippers, a bone skate, prehistoric flint tools, Roman finds, a great auk and a polar bear’s foot. The first keeper, or sub-curator as he was titled, was William Proctor (1798-1877), a carpenter turned taxidermist, who appointed in 1834 served for forty-three years (Whiting 1932:287; Harding 1982:37). According to his local obituary he was “known . . . throughout the whole of England . . . as a competent authority in all matters connected with his profession” (Anon 1878:42) and Whiting (1932:287) noted that he had a “considerable reputation as a scientific naturalist”. He is remarked for his trip to Iceland in search of exhibits (Whiting 1932:287); a lithograph shows him wearing some long lost indigenous apparel, holding a bird destined to become a stuffed ornithological specimen. His successor was Joseph Cullingford, another taxidermist from the British Museum (Natural History),<sup>27</sup> who together with his brother and his widow, who followed him, served as custodians for the next fifty years (Harding 1982:38). The collection remained eclectic throughout, similar to “most early museums it was very miscellaneous in character, even to the point of being ridiculous” and some visitors made derisive comments about “the strange juxtapositions to be seen in the Museum” (Harding 1982:39). The ethnographic objects at the turn of the century included some Indian girl’s footwear, in addition to aforementioned Chinese slippers, some Maori flax cloth, Icelandic saddles, a catamaran model, a plaited Chinese pigtail, and various

<sup>25</sup> The Museum has since moved between the Fulling Mill and Palace Green: in 1880 (to PG), 1956 (back to FM) and 2013 (back to PG). The founding of the Museum paralleled the actions of several Literary and Philosophical Societies in the North-East of England that established museums at this time (Harding 1982:37).

<sup>26</sup> The Museum started with a “natural history” collection presented by Thomas Gisborne, prebendary of Durham (Le Schonix 1892:193; Fowler 1904:102-3). Primarily stuffed birds (including the infamous great auk - Le Schonix 1892:195), the collection was soon supplemented with various donations of material from other persons, who also paid for the fitting out of the mill as a museum (Tristram 1903:166; Whiting 1932:286).

<sup>27</sup> According to Canon Tristram (1903:167), who was instrumental in his appointment, Cullingford was Britain’s foremost taxidermist.

coins and tokens, in addition to a range of British folk items, among other things. In the opinion of one visitor it comprised a “mixed assortment of ethnological curios of the sort that are usually met with in provincial collections . . . that are of no special value” (Le Schonix 1892:193). He goes on to refer to the museum having a “wonderful collection of ill-assorted relics – a hopeless jumble . . . [as] found in old-fashioned museums”, describing some items as “absurdities” and “comical things . . . most entertaining” [p. 195] that serve as a “gazing stock for the vulgar”, and which he haughtily concludes “excite the ridicule of the thoughtful” (Le Schonix 1892:195-96). The situation did not improve over the next decade, as a somewhat satirical editorial in the *Durham University Journal* indicates, pointing out, among other matters, that “there was something incongruous in the proximity of pigtailed and the coffin of St. Cuthbert” and going on to describe how the authors finally left “disheartened by the shocks . . . received” in the “close and musty . . . cold as charity” almshouses (Anon 1903:133). The state of the Museum became parlous, with the disposal of some exhibits elsewhere and dispersal of others to colleges and departments (Whiting 1932:288), until the early 1930s that is, and the appointment of Eric Birley to a lectureship in archaeology, who oversaw the subsequent move back to a refurbished Fulling Mill Museum and on-going consolidation of the archaeological collections (Harding 1982:41-42).

An antiquarian in the Museum’s omnivorous tradition was William Greenwell (1820-1918), a Durham graduate, who served as Bursar of University College, Chaplain of Bishop Cosin’s Hall, Canon and Librarian of Durham Cathedral (Fowler 1904 150-158), whose work was a precursor of today’s anthropology, foreshadowing its socio-cultural, biological and material culture dimensions. He is known beyond academia for creating Greenwell’s Glory<sup>28</sup> a trout fly that many fishermen still use. The author of *British Barrows* (1877) he contributed to the acceptance by archaeology of the Three Age System (Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages), by identifying stages in the uncivilised and pagan past; illustrating “the condition and habits of life of the people of that time, and the stage of cultivation and civilization to which they had attained” (Greenwell 1894:87). He drew on his experience excavating many Bronze Age burial mounds, including involvement in the Heathery Burn Cave site in Weardale that contained some of Europe’s most significant Bronze Age finds (Greenwell 1894),<sup>29</sup> and his pioneering work at Grime’s Graves flint mines in Norfolk (marked today by the shaft named Greenwell’s Pit after him) that contributed to understanding of Neolithic technology and communities (Greenwell 1870). The book includes a discussion (by George Rolleston) of excavated human remains and their ethnic origin; Canon Greenwell was also involved in the opening of Saint Cuthbert’s grave in 1899 when the skeletal remains were studied for their ethnic and historical significance (the tomb was opened previously several times, Symeon was present at the 1104 opening). He had interests in architectural history too, particularly Durham’s ecclesiastical architecture, property and landholdings, drawing on a range of structural, textual and comparative evidence to further its appreciation, and was active in promoting the conservation of historic buildings.<sup>30</sup> He was a keen collector of artefacts, some from excavation, although it is unfair to caricature him like some of his generation as a barrow-robber, for he acquired most things from dealers and fellow collectors (Graves

<sup>28</sup> Together with James Wright in 1854, a celebrated Tweedside fly-tier.

<sup>29</sup> The collection is now in the British Museum and includes a large range of artefacts together with human and animal remains, importantly including metal-working foundry tools and Britain’s earliest evidence of wheeled transport. The cave no longer exists, as I discovered one weekend taking my family on a hike across the hills north of Stanhope in search of it, when the resident of a cottage near the site laughed and explained, looking at our Ordnance Survey map, that the site is today an abandoned limestone quarry pit in the hillside (it was quarrymen who in 1843 discovered the cave).

<sup>30</sup> Notably as the President of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, in which office he served for 46 years.

2005),<sup>31</sup> one of whom was Pitt-Rivers who claimed that Greenwell gave him his “very first lessons” in material culture, and between whom there was some collecting rivalry. It seems that Greenwell had little interest in the University Museum though, with its then natural history focus (although he is listed in the University Calendar as a member of the Museum Board and was honorary curator between 1844 and 1851 – Harding 1982:38). There is nothing attributed to him in its collections other than a Bronze Age rapier;<sup>32</sup> unlike his student Pitt-Rivers, whose Bethnal Green Museum collection became the foundation of Oxford’s eponymous ethnographic museum.<sup>33</sup> It was arguably a missed opportunity with hindsight, in view of subsequent developments that saw the Durham Museum’s focus shift towards archaeology, starting with the arrival in 1880 of excavated material from nearby Vinovium (Binchester) Roman fort and continuing up to the present day (Le Schonix 1892:194; Tristram 1903:167; Whiting 1932:287; Harding 1982:40).<sup>34</sup>

Evolution was a prominent theory of the Victorian age. It swept the intellectual board in the biological and human sciences, elegantly accounting for life on Earth, particularly in accommodating the palaeontological evidence, but less convincing when it came to social and cultural arrangements, where conjecture replaced evidence. On the biological side we have William King (1809-1886), Sunderland born and educated, who in 1840 was appointed curator of the Newcastle Museum<sup>35</sup>, which housed the collections of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne. Although he had no formal education in geology, he became known in palaeontological circles of his time. However, there was a disagreement over some fossils that he thought to be his private collection and in 1849 he accepted the Chair of Mineralogy and Geology at the new Queen’s College Galway. He is famous for declaring the Neanderthals a species, a significant early step in the study of human evolution. After careful study of a plaster cast of the fossil cranium found in 1856 in the Feldhofer Cave of the river Düssel’s Neander Valley (again following limestone quarrying), King (1864a & b) proposed at the 1863 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Newcastle-upon-Tyne that it represented a species different to humans and named it *Homo neanderthalensis*<sup>36</sup>, pointing out that the cave sediments dated to 30,000 or more years ago. It was revolutionary and a landmark in the study of human evolution, coming only four years after the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and made King the first person to name a new species of hominin beside *Homo sapiens*, which was to court sarcastic establishment scorn, aimed not solely at voluble metropolitan scientists who came to the attention of *Punch* cartoonists.

The Victorian naturalist clergyman Henry Baker Tristram (1822-1906), educated in Durham and Residentiary Dean there for the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well-known denizen of the College, was also caught up in the evolutionary debate. His interest in natural history was evident from childhood and while a student at the University in 1840 he spent

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<sup>31</sup> Arguably encouraging barrow robbers.

<sup>32</sup> Gemma Lewis, Deputy Curator of the Castle and Archaeological collections pers. comm.

<sup>33</sup> According to Fowler (1904: 156-157), Greenwell presented his collection of objects from barrows to the British Museum where known as the ‘Greenwell Collection’, his collection of skulls to the New Museum in Oxford, and sold his collection of stone implements to a private collector.

<sup>34</sup> On its recent move back to the Palace Green Library, the Museum reverted back to a provincial Victorian format, displaying a wide range of largely historical items, including some archaeological objects (the bulk stored in the Old Fulling Mill) but no ethnological material (the current collection is housed in the Anthropology Department) or natural history specimens (sold off or destroyed).

<sup>35</sup> Attached then to the Literary and Philosophical Society’s building; today part of Newcastle’s Central Railway Station, which subsequently in 1884 became the Hancock Museum adjacent to the University, and today, as noted earlier, is the Great North Museum.

<sup>36</sup> This extension of ‘Neanderthal man’, the then common name for the individual fossil, to the species fortunately had priority above *Homo stupidus* proposed by Ernst Haeckel a couple of years later.

time with Proctor in the Museum – who was described as “ever active in lending . . . advice to students” (Anon 1878:42) -- learning about taxidermy among other things (Baker 1996:329).<sup>37</sup> He was to prove a supporter of the Museum in later life; unlike his contemporary Greenwell (they were friends from school onwards -- Fowler 1904:150) Tristram “played an important part in the affairs of the University Museum” (Baker 1996:333). The then prominence of natural history in the collections accorded with his interests and he supplied new material for the museum and served for a period as honorary curator, supporting Proctor his old mentor (Hale 2016:37). He defended the Museum against aforementioned criticism, pointing out that limited resources impeded improvements<sup>38</sup> and he was instrumental in having the collections moved in the 1870s from the Old Fulling Mill, where the damp conditions were unsuitable, to the Almshouses on Palace Green (Tristram 1903:166-67; Harding 1982:39).

It was while describing a series of lark songbirds from the Sahara region, a year after Wallace’s and Darwin’s communications to the Linnean Society, that Tristram declared himself convinced by their theory that species evolve from one into another, in arguably the first scientific paper to deploy evolutionary theory (Baker 1996:331; Armstrong 2000:6; Hale 2016:85). In the paper he refers to “the causes which perpetuate and eliminate certain forms ‘according to natural means of selection’” pointing out that “differences of structure . . . doubtless have a very direct bearing on the ease or difficulty with which the animal contrives to maintain its existence” and that in “the struggle for life which we know to be going on among all species . . . from Man downwards, we find a tendency to transmit individual varieties or peculiarities to the descendants . . . changes not advantageous to [species] means of existence, may . . . become extinct”. (Tristram 1859:429-432). While he makes the comments in the context of desert birds, he suggests that they apply equally to “the Guinea Negro or the Papuan . . . [and] typical Caucasian”, due to “climatic and other local causes” (Tristram 1859:429). But later, during the British Association of Science meeting where Huxley and Wilberforce famously clashed over evolutionary theory, he inclined to side with the bishop against the scientist (Bodenheimer 1957:96; Baker 1996: 332; Hale 2016:93-97), illustrating his personal struggle to reconcile scientific evolution with biblical creation.<sup>39</sup> During the Association debate, Tristram “waxed exceeding wrath as the discussion went on and declared himself more and more anti-Darwinian”.<sup>40</sup> We see his perplexity early on, in his lark commentary, where after arguing that the “causes enumerated which might serve to create as it were a new species from an old one . . . are perfectly natural causes”, he goes on to stress that he does “not mean for a moment . . . to presume so far to limit Creative Power” noting that “it is contrary . . . to Christian faith to doubt the creation of many species by the simple exercise of Almighty volition . . . . every peculiarity or difference in the living inhabitants of each country is admirably adapted by the wisdom of their beneficent Creator for the support and preservation of the species”, and he seeks to overcome the evident contradiction by pointing out that as “God ordinarily works by natural means, it might be the

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<sup>37</sup> His first stuffed trophy was a jackdaw that he presented to Proctor for the collections (Baker 1996:329; Hale 2016:5-6).

<sup>38</sup> Tristram (1903:166) blamed “University Reform” legislation, probably referring to the 1864 Durham University Act that led to the establishment of a school of Physical Science, which took off in Newcastle and subsequently restricted expenditure on science in Durham, including “spending any . . . funds on the Museum” (see also Harding 1982:40-41).

<sup>39</sup> He puzzled, for instance, how natural selection could have created the immortal soul (Bodenheimer 1957:96). Arguably his early support of evolutionary ideas affected his subsequent ecclesiastical career (Hale 2016:90).

<sup>40</sup> An observation by the Cambridge zoologist Alfred Newton, a close friend of Tristram, in a letter to another colleague (quoted by Hale 2016:95; see also Günther 1908:xlili who quotes other notes that Newton sent to him). Nonetheless Tristram kept up correspondence with many prominent evolutionary scholars of his time including Darwin, Hooker and Galton.

presumption of an unnecessary miracle to assume a distinct and separate origin for many of those which we term species” (Tristram 1859:431-433).

An archetypal natural historian of his time, Tristram took an interest in the wide sweep of nature from geography and geology to botany and zoology, and made particular contributions to ornithology, marked today by the several bird species named after him.<sup>41</sup> He travelled widely, particularly in the Levant, describing environments and collecting various natural specimens.<sup>42</sup> He also took an interest both in antiquarian remains, particularly the locations of Biblical events, and the peoples he encountered, and his travelogues, described by a colleague as “attractive narratives of his wanderings” (Günther 1908:xlili), include some early contributions to Levantine ethnography. In this respect he was an early fieldworker, which made him atypical in the era of armchair anthropologists, being among those pioneer natural historians who initiated ethnographic field research; as he put it himself, he was an “old-world naturalist . . . whose researches have been, not in the laboratory . . . but on the wide desert, the mountain side” (quoted by Baker 1996:335). His interest in customs arguably dates back to his early Museum experiences amidst eclectic exhibits that included local folk items, and is further seen in his brief note on local Northumbrian customs -- in the folklore tradition that again predates ‘anthropology at home’ -- where he describes an oracular procedure to identify a witch in a Teeside village<sup>43</sup> that he learned about while Master of Greatham Hospital<sup>44</sup> and village vicar (Tristram 1861).

His first ethno-travelogue covers his journeys in the Atlas Mountain and adjacent Sahara regions of Algeria, and recounts aspects of life there (Tristram 1860). While these intrigue him -- as evident, for instance, in his account of Arab falconry and a bustard hunt that reflect his ornithological interests (Tristram 1860:63-66) -- he nonetheless shows himself to be a man of his time. He considers the people decidedly inferior, criticising when frustrated by events, the “characteristic improvidence of [the] race” and commenting that “Arabs are very children, and scarcely capable of self-control” (Tristram 1860:48, 256). The Berbers come off no better, the: “straw-wattled hovels, of a tribe or clan of mountain Arabs . . . far more squalid and filthy than the less sophisticated nomads . . . present the most wretched and miserable appearance” (Tristram 1860:34). As for the Tuareg, they are “incorrigible robbers; *i.e.*, if they are strong enough to do so, they will rob any caravan which has not paid them blackmail” (Tristram 1860:242). And similarly with Bedouin nomads, “as with everything oriental, all was fairy-like till approached; then camels, palms, villages, Bedouin, all had a coarse and squalid reality” (Tristram 1860:325). His assumptions of superiority notwithstanding, Tristram relates some interesting ethnography on the region, including

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<sup>41</sup> These include (see Baker 1996:334) Tristram’s grackle (*Onychognathus tristramii*, which he discovered in a Deep Sea gorge – Tristram 1866:209), [Tristram’s or sooty storm-petrel](#) (*Oceanodroma tristrami*), [Tristram’s warbler](#) (*Sylvia deserticola*) and [Tristram’s woodpecker](#) (*Dryocopus javensis richardsi*); and also the small rodent Tristram’s gerbil ([Meriones tristrami](#)). He was also a founder member of the British Ornithologists’ Union and *The Ibis* its journal.

<sup>42</sup> His extensive collections comprised tens of thousands of specimens encompassing six thousand species, some of considerable rarity, primarily of birds, but also mammals, fish, insects, molluscs, plants, geological samples and archaeological remains (Günther 1908:xliv; Sclater 1908:155-56; Baker 1996:334; Hale 2016:223-24). While his methods, shooting many birds, as the ‘Great Gun of Durham’ (Baker 1996:333), and collecting eggs, were deplorable by today’s standards “sufficient to induce minor trauma in the modern conservation-minded ornithologist” (Armstrong 2000:73), in later life Tristram became an ardent advocate of bird protection, promoting the Wild Bird Protection Bill to the British Association and before a Parliamentary Committee and towards the end of his life serving as Vice President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (Bodenheimer 1957:97; Baker 1996:332; Armstrong 2000:78).

<sup>43</sup> It involved family members pushing pins into a live pigeon that they then roasted, identifying the witch as the first person past their window after the procedure.

<sup>44</sup> The Hospital at Greatham is an ancient charity founded by the Bishop of Durham in 1273 to care for the poor and elderly.

accounts of peoples' dress, particularly of women, and handicrafts such as weaving, including dyeing of wool; desert travel and Bedouin caravans; sheep herding and crop cultivation, especially of dates, including reference to wells and irrigation methods; and predictably for a man of the Church, a discourse on Islamic religious practices, including Berber versions of the faith, together with fascinating descriptions of M'zab valley towns and their mosques, today UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including organisation of local government and justice.<sup>45</sup> Regarding local practices, Tristram cites Tuareg breeding of their esteemed white dromedary camels as another example of the "transmutation of species", artificial human selection mirroring the natural selection of evolution; before, that is, he recanted support for the theory (Hale 2016:90). His experiences generate an almost surprised sounding respect for the people, with comments such as: "How the guides ever know the different ways over these boundless deserts without apparent landmarks, is to me a mystery" and he concludes that the "difficulty of the country and the scarcity of landmarks must quicken the perceptive faculties in a marvellous degree; and accordingly they . . . will tell by his footmarks to what tribe a traveller belonged; they profess to distinguish the sex of a wild animal by its track, or the species of a date by its stone" (Tristram 1860:255, 321).

The two later Levant travelogues (Tristram 1866 and 1873) include similar accounts of aspects of Arab life, covering farming and food; nature knowledge and hunting, again notably with falcons; dress and ornamentation; houses and settlements, tents and camps; oases and wells; entertainment and hospitality, including coffee traditions; lawlessness and raiding; marriage, funerals and sacrifice. These volumes are particularly informative about different tribes giving details of their territories and reputations that according to Tristram are largely wayward (e.g. Tristram 1866:478-83). The S'hoor-el-Ghor, for instance, are of "ill repute, and lose no opportunity of plunder which presents itself, being treacherous and vindictive even for Arabs" whereas the Adwân prosecute "relentless war. . . . are very avaricious, and considered the most perfidious" (Tristram 1866:478 & 480). But again he shows himself sensitive to local ways, for instance regarding pastoralism he notes that the Beni Sakk'r lay claim to "large tracts in the centre of North Arabia . . . moving constantly with countless flocks, herds and camels . . . their restlessness is accounted for by the difficulty of finding pasturage." (Tristram 1866:481). It seems that, as with his evolutionary views, he is pulled in two directions: derogatory following his colonial times yet sympathetic considering his field observations.

Later in life, after visiting one of his daughters who was serving as a missionary in Japan, he published a final ethno-travelogue book, covering his journeys there (Tristram 1895). But it is the volume that he published in the previous year, *Eastern customs in Bible lands*, that most resembles an ethnography. It mixes up accounts of peoples' customs with Biblical comparisons and quotes from scripture, with the aim of showing that ways of life in the "hallowed land" remain largely unchanged, so confirming the "truthfulness" of the scriptures (Tristram 1894:vi). This point of view is evident in his earlier *Sahara* book where he compares a passing Bedouin caravan to the way that "Jacob and his family proceeded . . . to meet his brother Esau. How stereotyped for ages has been every custom of daily life among the pastoral tribes of the East?" (Tristram 1860:69). He repeats this example in the *Bible lands* book "pilgrim caravans . . . travel exactly as such parties have journeyed since the days of Abraham" and similarly with respect to mourning, "customs have come down unchanged from Bible times", as have several other customs (Tristram 1894:54 & 100). In addition to costume, habitations and travel, the book covers pastoralism and agriculture, marriage and social etiquette, hospitality, feasting and dancing, various rituals such as those

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<sup>45</sup> See, for instance, Tristram 1860 pages 68-69, 96-97, 130, 133-135, 145, 154-57, 167, 203-8, 285, 288, 308, 310, 320.

attending funerals, and warfare, law and trade, including money and tribute payments. He is more respectful of local customs in this volume, likely because he repeatedly draws parallels with life in the Bible, rather than having changed his mind about them. The occasional condescending comment suggests this, such as: “the Oriental has no practical idea of the value of time . . . he will dawdle away the best part of the day” or more directly “the *fellaheen* are . . . indolent”, and disparaging remarks about the “frightful corruption and malignity . . . of Asia” and the “stagnation of the Oriental races” even more so (Tristram 1894:56-57, 125, 133, 228 & 235). Other observations evidence ethnocentric misunderstandings common in his day, such as: “Moslem marriage . . . is regarded solely as a business matter” where an “Arab father regards his daughters much as he would his sheep or cattle, selling them for a greater or less price, according to his rank and fortune and their beauty” (Tristram 1894:91 & 92). These attitudes suggest then current cultural evolutionary views.

On the armchair cultural evolution side we have Frank Jevons (1858-1936), appointed tutor in classics at Durham University and subsequently made Professor of Philosophy, who served in several university and college offices, including that of Warden and Vice-Chancellor. He wrote several books on cultural evolutionary issues, notably the evolution of religion, which as he noted in his first book on the topic, *An introduction to the history of religion*, he founded “on the principles and methods of anthropology” (1896:2). He was a quintessential library anthropologist and his view of those principles and methods was questionable by today’s standards, informed by the prevalent “Victorian intellectualist outlook which identified primitive peoples of other cultures with the children of their own British culture” (Davies 1991: xxxvii). His view of the comparative method, for instance, was that it “compares features belonging to cultures of similar levels of development . . . to ascertain the differences between religions . . . [and] reconstruct missing phases in the development of religions” (Davies 1991: 3-4). Jevons draws on his knowledge of the classical Greek and Roman world to illustrate his speculations about the passage from savage to civilised customs. And he sought to contextualise his understanding of the evolution of religion with respect to his own Christian beliefs, such that questioning “the religious and moral significance of whatever was being debated. His use of materials drawn from anthropological sources was . . . saved . . . from becoming a mere recital of odd human activities” (Davies 1991: xxviii). In this respect we can understand his sympathy for missionary activities mentioned previously, as seen in his lectures to an audience of missionaries-in-training at the Hartford Theological Seminary, which comprise his *Introduction to the study of comparative religion*, where he observes that looking with “the eye of the missionary over the globe, everywhere we see arrested development, imperfect communion with God” (1908:257), which it is the missionaries task to overcome, replacing fear with a “revealed divine love”.

Jevons discussed many of the topics of interest to his generation: magic, animism, fetishism, taboo, totemism, ancestor worship, sacrifice, mythology, polytheism and monotheism, which he thought equated with various stages of human development, from savage to civilised communities. Among his contributions to the debates of his time, he argued that religion did not develop from belief in magic. He argued that ‘sympathetic magic’ equates with primitive science and not primitive religion, and made the modern sounding assertion that “the principle and the methods of savage logic and scientific logic are identical” (Jevons 1900:12), which seems to contradict the childlike primitive culture image. But his argument goes off in a dubious direction, contending that the “theory of causation and the methods of induction . . . produced one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind, the belief in magic” (1896:35). The origin of religion, he argued, is a desire to establish friendly relations with supernatural powers that all humans believe in, and grew out



of the practice of communicating with the spirits of the dead. He subscribed to many conjectures similar to his contemporaries, such as totemic relations with supernatural powers followed the model of clan relations that supposedly characterised the earliest societies, where people saw “natural kinds, genera and species . . . it is small wonder . . . [they] detected a resemblance between the natural kinds of animals, plants etc., and the kins or clans into which human society was divided” (1896:99-100). But some of his speculations are hard to credit. He thought that the alliance between clan and totem altered the human worldview because forging an alliance with the supernatural gave confidence to intervene in the world and make material progress. Totemism was not only a significant stage in the evolution of religion but also economy: “totemism was the prime motor of all material progress” (1896:113). It led to the domestication of animals: “The totem animal . . . is revered, protected, and allowed, or rather encouraged to increase and multiply . . . continued for generations . . . the animal is welcomed with rejoicing as the manifestation of the tribal deity, offerings are made to it, and, being free from molestation, it discovers the fact, acquires confidence, and if it has the instinct of domestication, ceases to be wild” (1896:114-15). He went on to speculate that animal totems preceded plant ones because: “the agricultural is universally a later stage in the development of civilisation than the pastoral” (1896:115). And finally he concludes that paradoxically “the domestication to which totemism inevitably leads . . . is fatal to totemism” (1896:120) because domestication marks larger settled populations where community associations replace clan loyalties and “the germ of higher religious belief . . . is enabled also to burst its sheath” (1896:121).

It was such flights of fancy that brought cultural evolution into disrepute with following generations and Jevons, following the popularity of his books, became a target of scalding criticism. For instance, Evans-Pritchard (1965:5) refers to his work as a “*locus classicus* . . . [of] how erroneous theories of primitive religions can be . . . a collection of absurd reconstructions, unsupportable hypotheses and conjectures, wild speculations, suppositions and assumptions, inappropriate analogies, misunderstandings and misinterpretations, and especially in what he wrote about totemism, just plain nonsense”. But a closer reading of Jevons’ work reveals a more subtle mind than such damning criticism allows, as he engages with some perennial current issues (Davies 1991). He tackles head on the topic of relativity, which also exercised Evans-Pritchard, arguing that it is not possible to define the terms ‘man’ or ‘god’ because no one can know fellow human beings let alone know the workings of a divine being (Davies 1991:xv). While he acknowledges that all humans have the capacity for religious experience, he maintains that the ‘essence’ of religion is personal to the individual and beyond the grasp others, however empathetic. He seeks to further understanding of accessible collective religious behaviour as opposed to inaccessible individual belief, whatever the faith of the observer. He refers to a “fundamental difference between religion as experienced by the man who feels it, and religion as it is known to the man who observes it purely from the outside, and who conducts his observations on scientific principles and embodies the results of his observations in the form of a Science of Religion. . . . when the history of religion is thus scientifically written the question of the value, the worth or the truth of religion is not touched upon” (Davies 1991:158-59<sup>46</sup>). Yet, in advocating the collective perspective, which came to dominate 20<sup>th</sup> century social anthropology, he criticises Durkheim’s view that supernatural beliefs reflect an unaware sense of a communal force greater than the individual and that belief systems represent misplaced reflection on its power, being a force that the sociologist identifies not as of a deity but as of society, going so far as to suggest that in associated ritual activity believers unknowingly worship society itself. “Jevons does not espouse that kind of methodology

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<sup>46</sup> Quoting from an unpublished lecture manuscript he calls ‘The Comparative Method 1’

which assumes privileged access to true explanations on the part of the scholar which is unknown and probably unknowable to the devotee. . . . The reduction of one element to another, or the metamorphosis of one into another is something he does not favour” (Davies 1991:108). In a way that foretells the modern distinction between structure and process, and balancing between paradoxically opposing collective and individual perspectives, Jevons not only criticises reification of the idea of society (as in talk of a collective unconscious, for its individuals who have minds not societies) but he also criticises disproportionate focus on the individual. He associates the latter with Spencer (Davies 1991:111-12), who he accuses of portraying individuals as selfish, only interacting with others for what they can get out of it and overlooking the crucial influence of socialisation, sociality of behaviour, mutuality of interaction and responsibilities actors recognise towards others.

While immoderate speculation resulted in cultural evolutionary theory going out of favour in anthropology for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has staged a comeback and today’s cultural evolutionists might profit from familiarising themselves with the arguments and errors of Jevons and his generation. He was known to, and debated with, the luminaries of his age, such as Durkheim, Freud, Tylor, Haddon and Frazer (the latter marked in part by an honorary Durham Litt. D.), although not himself a leading light, being modest by temperament and provincial to boot. As his biographer comments “the fact that he lived, taught, and wrote in Durham . . . influenced his more marginal status in the scholarly and literary world of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain” (Davies 1991: 250-51).

*King’s College and University recognition of anthropology.*

It was under the umbrella of geography, not biology, philosophy or theology, that anthropology emerged in the University of Durham. The first mention of the subject is in the University Calendar for 1930-31 (p. 196), the inaugural year of the honours degree in geography,<sup>47</sup> the regulations for which list “anthropogeography” – whatever that was -- under “special study” topics. A further indication of anthropological content occurs under the regulations for the final pass degree examination (p. 174) that state it will include “Some consideration of racial and administrative problems in their geographic setting”, which in later years, under the masters degree regulations, changes to “racial and administrative problems in Africa” (University Calendar 1936-37: 215). There are further indications of anthropological content in subsequent Calendars, such as topics mentioned under 2<sup>nd</sup> and final year regulations that include: “The chief racial types; routes of migration” and “Environment and its effect on social evolution” (University Calendar 1936-37: 169).<sup>48</sup>

The inter-war years were thin times for anthropology with evolutionist and diffusionist speculative history largely continuing as the prevailing approach across Britain -- as evident in the foregoing summary of degree content -- except in London where a group around Bronislaw Malinowski that subscribed to his ethnographic approach was setting the agenda for the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is something of a mystery to later generations that the field research central to this group did not appear as mainstream earlier in the discipline’s

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<sup>47</sup> Previous Calendars signal the introduction of a degree in geography, the University Calendar 1927-28 notes that the regulations for 1<sup>st</sup> year examinations in geography “come into force June 1928”, those for 2<sup>nd</sup> year examinations in June 1929, and those for final year examinations in June 1930.

<sup>48</sup> The person behind the degree’s anthropological content was possibly Dorothy Sylvester (Maddrell 2009 219-22), appointed a lecturer in 1930. She was a historical geographer strongly influenced by H. J. Fleure (Professor of Anthropology and Geography at University College Aberystwyth from 1917 to 1930 and President of the Royal Anthropological Institute from 1945 to 1947), a polymath known in anthropology for his work on racial characteristics, such as his Welsh Anthropological Survey (Garnett 1970). One of whose students was W. B. Fisher who was to figure in the subsequent history of Durham anthropology. Sylvester’s fellow geographer in the Durham Colleges was Gordon Manley, a climatologist appointed in 1928 and presumably responsible for the establishment of the undergraduate degree programme (Manley 1937). At Armstrong College the geographers were George Daysh, a regional planner appointed in 1930 and Margaret Tyrrell, also a 1930 appointment.

development because it seems obvious that it is the only way to ensure reliable ethnographic evidence that the subject depends on – as Evans-Pritchard (1965:6) graphically put it: imagine if “a chemist had never thought it necessary to enter a laboratory”. One reason is that it threatened the conjectural status quo. The University of Durham had an indication of significant coming developments in 1935 when Malinowski came to Armstrong College and gave that year’s Riddell Memorial Lectures, entitled ‘The foundations of faith and morals: An anthropological analysis of primitive beliefs and conduct with special reference to the fundamental problems of religion and ethics’, which featured his signature use of Trobriand Island material, together with reference to Australian Aboriginal and a smattering of other ethnography, to theorise about the human condition generally. He told his audience that the “task of anthropology is to reveal the fundamental nature of human institutions through comparative study” and that this involves “all-round interest [in cultural features] so indispensable to all functional analyses, that is [for example], analyses of the mutual influence of religion and ordinary life, of magic and economics” (Malinowski 1936: vii, 32).<sup>49</sup>

The first reference to anthropology as a discipline in the University occurs in the Armstrong College Departmental Reports for 1935-36, under the Department of Geography, which note that Ronald Peel, appointed to a lectureship, has a “Diploma in Anthropology. His ability in this latter field widens our teaching range very definitely” (Newcastle University nd.a:47). The Departmental Report for the following year 1936-37 (Newcastle University nd.b:45) further records that Peel had carried out the “first series of Anthropological studies in the department with marked success”; probably reference to his work on intermarriage, an “inquiry into English rural sociology” drawing on parish marriage registers (Peel 1942a) – more ‘anthropology at home’ ahead of its time. Although he read anthropology together with geography at Cambridge and then the Diploma with distinction, Peel subsequently gravitated towards physical geography and became an expert on desert geomorphology, particularly of the Sahara (Hackett 1986:370), his anthropological swansong comprising a couple of papers on that region (Peel 1939, 1942b). A significant event institutionally at this time, which was to have implications for anthropology, was a Royal Commission in 1937 that recommended the merging of the two parts of the Newcastle Division<sup>50</sup> into one to form King’s College.<sup>51</sup>

Institutional recognition of the discipline came a decade later in 1947 with the establishment of a readership in anthropology. The University Calendar for that year still has ‘anthropogeography’ listed under the final honours in geography regulations at King’s College (perhaps taught by George Daysh, then professor, who in some editions of the University Calendar has FRAI (Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute) after his name, who was possibly influenced by Peel (also FRAI in some editions of the Calendar) who had left the previous year). But the profile of anthropology was about to change significantly. The Calendar for the following year has Siegfried Nadel (1903-1956) occupying the readership. He had come through Malinowski’s circle and was a prominent figure in early post-war developments and the rise of social anthropology as a sub-discipline, as evident in

<sup>49</sup> It is worth noting in passing that Malinowski’s brother-in-law, Irvine Masson (Haworth and Lamberton 1963:206; Young 2004:450), was professor of chemistry at Durham University from 1924 to 1938 and head of the newly formed Department of Science. He played a significant part in the establishment of the Dawson Building (Whiting 1932:237; Masson 1937:28-29), home then to the Department of Science and currently occupied by the Department of Anthropology -- albeit he came close to demolishing the building during an experiment involving the preparation of salts of iodoxybenzene that wrecked a laboratory, blew out the window and seriously injured him (Haworth and Lamberton 1963:215); he worked on explosives in the 1939-45 war.

<sup>50</sup> The aforementioned Medical School and Armstrong College.

<sup>51</sup> The Vice-Chancellorship of the federal university alternated between the Warden of Durham and the Rector of Newcastle Division.

the new entry under the honours in geography regulations that states “The emphasis of the courses in question is on “Social Anthropology”, *i.e.*, on the study of primitive (sic) peoples, their culture and social organisation” (p. 198). He had conducted field research in the African kingdom of Nupe and among the Nuba people of Sudan, which resulted in three classic ethnographic monographs: *A black Byzantium* (1942), *The Nuba* (1947) and *Nupe religion* (1954). Unlike his contemporaries, who advanced structural-functional theory in the context of small-scale tribal societies -- seen as complex systems comprising parts that function to maintain order and solidarity -- he applied these ideas of social stability to a kingdom of half a million people featuring a political-economic structure comparable with “the civilizations of Imperial Rome, of Byzantium, of mediaeval Europe” (Nadel 1942:vii). He was arguably a “pioneer” (Freeman 1956:4). It prompted him early on to draw on sociology, which today is commonplace, and subsequently to enquire into the conceptual underpinnings of social anthropology.

The sociological trajectory informed Nadel’s consequent contributions to social theory, firstly in his book *The foundations of social anthropology* completed while at Durham “a remarkable feat even if it had not been accomplished at the same time as the creation of a new teaching department” (Fortes 1957:xiii).<sup>52</sup> He intended the book to further understanding of “the logical premises that underlie our knowledge of societies” (Nadel 1951:v). In this respect he was atypical for his time, focussing not on the structure and function of the social group exclusively -- regardless of the title *The theory of social structure* of his posthumous book -- but arguing for consideration too of the individual actor, reflecting his training in psychology. But his promotion of psychological considerations was not popular with the sociological mainstream of social anthropology; for instance, Firth (1957:122) thought it “a bold enterprise . . . [that] was only partly successful . . . one difficulty about the book [*The foundations*] lies in its . . . psychological explanations”. The actor focus put him well ahead of his time, for it is only recently with attention to social process that individual agency has entered the theoretical mainstream, released from the structural straitjacket, albeit Nadel’s (1957) contribution scarcely features. His final posthumous contribution appears today as an unsuccessful and impenetrable attempt to apply formal logic to analyse social behaviour, using associated strange algebraic notation; although one of his first students thought it a “penetrating discussion of role analysis” destined to “become one of the standard texts of social anthropology” (Freeman 1956:10) and another that it showed him “light-years ahead of his more pedestrian anthropological colleagues” (Worsley 2008: 82).

An ambitious and reputedly “abrasive and arrogant” person (Berndt 1992:69), Durham did not suit Nadel -- although Fortes (1957:xiii) diplomatically recalls in his Nadel memoir that his time here was ‘two packed and fruitful years’ -- and he moved on to the chair at the newly founded Australian National University, after receiving the Rivers’ Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, which according to Fortes is “one of the most prized honours in the world of anthropology” (1957:xiii). In his obituary, where we expect measured tribute, Firth (1957:122) gives some further indication of Nadel’s brusque personality, speaking of a person who had “no false modesty about the value of his own theoretical approach . . . sensitive to his professional status and with decided opinions upon the best way to set up and organize academic institutions . . . and sometimes impatient in professional matters if he encountered what he thought was stupidity or inefficiency.” His students were franker: Peter Worsley told me that Nadel was, paraphrasing his rich comment, an unpleasant man, which he further intimates in his autobiography, telling us that “though an

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<sup>52</sup> There is some hyperbole in Fortes’ memory of Nadel as Head of a department comprising one person; the Calendar lists him under Daysh’s Geography Department.

Austrian, his style was Prussian”, an individual who was “perfectly prepared to put [you] down . . . quite rudely” (2008: 81, 125). And Marie Reay (1992:138, 158) is forthright, saying that she “found him domineering” and referring to him as the “the god-professor”, who used his “repertoire of steely stares” to intimidate students. All three of these contemporaries express shock at learning of Nadel’s self-professed “bullying technique” with informants (1957:120, 1992:154; 2008:81). It seems that the nascent Durham department was saved a divisive legacy, unlike some elsewhere.

The successor to the readership, Heinrich Meinhard (1900-1975), arrived in England seeking refuge from Nazi Germany in 1937, where his Jewish wife was in danger.<sup>53</sup> He was initially supported by the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning,<sup>54</sup> which assisted him in finding a place at Oxford’s Pitt-Rivers Museum where he and his volunteer wife worked on cataloguing various ethnographic collections. In the Museum’s Annual Report for 1938, Henry Balfour gratefully acknowledges “the assistance of Dr. Heinrich Meinhardt, a distinguished orientalist from Berlin University”. According to the 1944-45 Report, he subsequently left “to work on an Ethnographical Survey of Africa for the International Institute of African Languages and Culture”, conducting fieldwork in Africa, with cattle pastoralists in the interlacustrine region. The parallels with his ambitious predecessor cease there. His appointment to the readership in 1950 was strange. Or as a colleague of Evans-Pritchard – who knew Meinhard in Oxford -- put it to me chuckling, when I mentioned my puzzlement over Meinhard’s selection, “oh, that was one of E-P’s<sup>55</sup> naughty appointments”.<sup>56</sup> Meinhard was like someone from Jevons’ era, a continental intellectual trained in Sanskrit studies with interests in museums and the ancient world, curiously out of step with then ascendant social anthropology. This ascendancy marked a striking switch of disciplinary interests and graphically illustrates the provisional character of the subject’s identity. Until he retired, Meinhard used black and white glass lantern slides in lectures (together with proverbial yellowing dog-eared notes), which for students was somewhat whimsical, like being transported back in time. As Beattie (1982:558) commented, regarding some of Meinhard’s lecture notes deposited in Oxford, they were “largely based on data outside the ordinary run of ethnography familiar to most English-speaking students”.

It seems that after the chronic insecurity he experienced upon leaving his post as curator of Indian civilisation at the National Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, Meinhard slumped into the haven of a tenured post. While he saw to his teaching and administrative duties, he conducted no research, or at least none that resulted in any publications, except for a contribution in retirement to a festschrift for his patron (Meinhard 1975), which interestingly given earlier comments on Bede and Symeon as proto-ethnographers concerns

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<sup>53</sup> He used to tell a gut-wrenching story of how she was nearly taken off when they were stopped and searched at the frontier but for a kindly young border guard who overlooked the *Jüdin* stamp on her papers.

<sup>54</sup> The organization, originally the Academic Assistance Council (renamed in 1936 the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning), assisted academics forced to flee the Nazi regime. It is of interest here for showing the intermeshing of academic relations from the metropolis to the provinces. It was founded in 1933 on the initiative of William Beveridge (of the ‘Beveridge Report’ that inspired Britain’s post-war welfare state), who was Lucy Mair’s (see below) paternal uncle (her mother worked alongside him as Secretary when he was Director of the LSE and subsequently married him after her father passed away). A further local connection is that they owned Tuggal Hall in Northumberland (he took the title Baron Beveridge of Tuggal), situated a few miles north of Howick Hall the seat of Earl Grey mentioned earlier.

<sup>55</sup> E-P was the sobriquet used for Evans-Pritchard by those who knew him.

<sup>56</sup> Evans-Pritchard was not the only referee approached, the University also requested references (Durham University nd.b.) from both Meyer Fortes (who knew Meinhard in Oxford too, when reader there) and Daryll Forde (who knew Meinhard when he worked on the Ethnographic Survey of Africa, of which he was general editor). Interestingly, another applicant for the readership was Philip Mayer, who would subsequently become briefly Meinhard’s successor. The other applicants were F. Rose (Australia), W. D. Hammond-Tooke (South Africa), W. Lehmann (Germany) and F. Henriques (UK, Leeds).

Medieval Teutonic patrilineal kinship. His only other publications, so far as I can trace them, were his doctoral thesis, as required in German academia, and two brief communications in *Man* (Meinhard 1928, 1939, 1940) that concern South Asian history (drawing on ancient Hindu texts to discuss the Shiva sect, prototype musical instruments and divine king regicide). Although his “extensive ethnographic survey in East Africa . . . resulted in a valuable set of lectures on the peoples of the area: these although fairly widely circulated in typescript were never published” (Beattie 1976:326).<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, in a generous obituary, Beattie (1976:326) observes that Meinhard was “a scholar and teacher of unusual distinction . . . [who] played an important part in the development of African studies” and, commenting on his apparently lacklustre record, that his “publications were few, owing largely to the very exacting standards of scholarship he set himself”.

*The consolidation of anthropology across King’s and Durham Colleges.*

The University established an anthropology lectureship in 1950, appointing Vernon Sheddick (1915-1991) to the post. He also worked in Africa and contributed the volume on the Sotho people of Basutoland (today Lesotho) to the classic International African Institute’s Ethnographic Survey of Africa series (Sheddick 1953), to which many distinguished post-war Africanists contributed. He was particularly interested in land tenure issues (Sheddick 1948, 1951, 1954) and the Wenner-Gren *Directory of Anthropological Institutions* (Thomas and Pikelis 1953) lists “European communities” too, which again put him ahead of his time. He was the target of possibly the most scurrilous book review – of his H.M.S.O Colonial Research Study *Land tenure in Basutoland* -- ever published by the Royal Anthropological Institute’s journal *Man*: “I am unable to say anything . . . [much] in favour of this book. It is idiosyncratic -and pretentious. The author seems to find it necessary to change nomenclature and spelling . . . there are terms such as ‘diadic,’ ‘utility regions,’ . . . [and] ‘fratricoooperation,’ the meanings of which are obscure. As to spelling, . . . the book [is] full of Sotho words simply spelt wrongly. . . . This, plus the use of a turgid and inaccurate style, makes the book useless for those for whom it was originally intended -- the administrative officers in the Basutoland service. Its obscurity is not an unmixed disadvantage, for the book is full of serious inaccuracies. . . . It will do the reputation of the anthropological discipline no good. It is full of errors. It is badly written. It is a book which, when once laid down, is almost impossible to pick up again.” (Duncan<sup>58</sup> 1957:11-12). While Sheddick was aware that the colonial authorities in Basutoland were unhappy at some of his findings (after all, in the book’s foreword they explicitly dissociate themselves from them), the review understandably distressed him and it prompted a heated letter from Gwilym (G. I.) Jones<sup>59</sup>: “I must protest at the irresponsibility of the review . . . in particular at the tone of its splenetic final paragraph. . . . I can sympathize with . . . [the reviewer’s] irritation at having to master an entirely novel and unorthodox terminology. . . . [but] I take exception to the suggestion . . . that this report . . . is both useless and a discredit to social anthropology. . . . Dr. Sheddick was asked to report on the existing land-tenure system in Basutoland, and that, I submit, is precisely what he has done” (Jones 1957). In retrospect, Sheddick was a courageous critic of the colonial authorities, when it was not fashionable but potentially career damaging to contradict them in

<sup>57</sup> The archive of the Ethnographic Survey of Africa of the International Institute of African Languages and Culture held at the LSE library has an unpublished report ‘The Nyamwezi’ by H. Meinhard (IAI/25/81 and IAI/25/82) that includes information on tribal and dialect groups, environment, settlement, economy, social organisation and bibliography, and a ‘Provisional outline of the ethnographic provinces of East Africa’ by Dr H. Meinhard (IAI/24/2) that covers Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya and includes a map of ‘ethnographic provinces’.

<sup>58</sup> Duncan was a former colonial District Officer in Basutoland and Sesuto speaker.

<sup>59</sup> G. I. Jones had also served in the Colonial Service as a District Officer in Nigeria, before taking up a Cambridge lectureship, and was well versed in the Service’s politics.

representing local views. And maybe too we should not be too hard on him for using impenetrable jargon in view of its subsequent proliferation.<sup>60</sup>

The University created another anthropology lectureship in 1954 to which Harry Powell (1919-2005) was appointed. He had conducted fieldwork on the Trobriand Islands, the first to do so after Malinowski some 30 years previously. It proved both a boon and a bane for him. It assured an audience interested in his work, although not always welcome as some sought to attack Malinowski using his findings. And he was drawn, against his better judgement, into some banal debates, such as the so-called 'virgin birth' controversy, prompting him to point out that the fiery "protagonists" were taking part in a fabricated "revived controversy" (Powell 1968:652). Furthermore, the large body of ethnography on the Islands, some of it contradictory, made him hesitant, exacerbating his tendency to deliberate at length over issues. In Harry Powell's obituary I observed, similar to Beattie's comments on Meinhard, that "his published work is not large but it is carefully considered and well worth reading" (Sillitoe 2006:21). His principal contributions furthered understanding of leadership and kinship issues on the Trobriands, in some closely argued and well received papers (Powell 1960, 1969a & b). He went to the Trobriands intending to study social change, drawing on the detailed ethnographic record to assess changes. He was ahead of his time, most anthropologists going to Melanesia to look at timeless tribal life. His contribution to the 'virgin birth' debate reflects this interest, pointing out that over half a century of colonial government, missionary and trader activity had influenced local ideas about procreation (Nature-Times News Service 1969). He was also at the forefront as a fieldworking ethnographic film maker; single-handedly shooting, editing and producing the film *Trobriand Islanders*, which shows yam cultivation and related magic, harvest festivals, preparing canoes to sail on a *kula* exchange expedition<sup>61</sup> and mortuary rites.<sup>62</sup>

The 1950s was not a dynamic period in the department's history. This is evident in the University's *Calendar* entries for the decade, giving regulations for degrees that feature anthropology and listing the courses examined. The undergraduate degrees and a postgraduate diploma remain much as designed by Nadel, first appearing in the *Calendar* for the 1949-50 academic year. In mitigation, we should note that faculty had to travel back-and-forth between Durham and Newcastle to give lectures and take tutorials. Harry Powell once commented to me that commuting back-and-forth hindered his research, writing and publication. It was not a new complaint. There was considerable correspondence in the early 1950s between the University administration and Meinhard, who protested about the hassle of travelling regularly between Durham and Newcastle in term time (Durham University nd.d.). The issue of teaching at both the Durham and King's Colleges came to a head when Sheddick and he submitted claims for the 'extra teaching' they did in the Durham Colleges, which prompted the University authorities to point out that their contracts of employment state clearly that they are responsible for delivering teaching in anthropology across all the University's Colleges. The episode persuaded the University to stipulate that the next person appointed to an anthropology post should reside in Durham, although as it turned out, once

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<sup>60</sup> Sheddick's research interests subsequently turned to England, notably the Northumbrian island of Lindisfarne, making him another early proponent of 'anthropology at home', albeit he later moved away to a post at the University of Ulster (he deposited his unpublished working papers on the 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century families of Holy Island in the Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office).

<sup>61</sup> Harry Powell was a keen sailor himself and owner of a catamaran, and arguably appreciated the remarkable skill needed to construct and navigate outrigger sailing canoes better than most ethnographers.

<sup>62</sup> He used a heavy, fixed-focus lens, 16mm camera, and no tripod, which required considerable technical knowledge of movie photography, unlike today's lightweight automatic digital cam-recorders. The Royal Anthropological Institute Film Library distributes *The Trobriand Islanders*; see <https://www.therai.org.uk/film/film-library-catalogue-vol-i-contents/the-trobriand-islanders>.

appointed, Powell opted to live in Newcastle near his two anthropological colleagues. It was a decision that he would come to regret.

These episodes may reflect growing tensions across the University with its divisional arrangements but relations within the institution remained largely cordial. But for the distance between Durham and Newcastle, the arrangements would possibly have continued to this day. Joint faculties and boards were a feature of the university's federal structure with meetings held alternately in Durham and Newcastle. Regarding geography, with which anthropology had a close association throughout this period: "The two departments had broadly similar course structures and the two staffs knew each other well. Indeed, the smallness and the nature of the Durham Colleges . . . meant that we were less departmentalized and perhaps more interactive than now" (Clarke 2005). There were three joint degrees, the main one being with geography,<sup>63</sup> which reflected anthropology's original location in that department. The courses listed in the *Calendar* between 1949 and 1952 are 1] systematic social anthropology, 2] regional studies, 3] physical anthropology and genetics, 4] technology and primitive economics, and 5] applied anthropology.<sup>64</sup> The Wenner-Gren's *Directory of Anthropological Institutions* (Thomas and Pikelis 1953) has under University of Durham: "Courses in Social Anthropology, Primitive Technology and Art, General Ethnography; physical anthropology included only in so far as it is relevant from the sociological point of view". The reference to technology and art reflects Meinhard's museological background, the *Directory* listing "material culture" under his interests; he likely played a part in the university's acquisition of the Brown collection of Pacific artefacts discussed earlier, which the *Calendar* includes under the Collections of the Department of Anthropology.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> The other two degree programmes with politics and economics were considerably smaller and were only available at King's College, whereas geography and anthropology was available in Durham too; the same anthropological syllabus and courses were taught on all three degree programmes.

<sup>64</sup> There are some course title changes in 1952-53 for one year, as follows: 1] introduction to social anthropology, 2] physical anthropology and primitive technology, 3] regional studies, 4] history of anthropological theory and applied anthropology, and 5] advanced systematic social anthropology. And from 1953 to 1963 a 1<sup>st</sup> year preliminary paper entitled introduction to anthropology appears, and the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> year course titles are 1] elements of cultural anthropology, 2] physical anthropology, genetics and race, 3] regional studies, 4] theory of social anthropology, and 5] systematic social anthropology. These suggest only small changes in course content, with the exceptions of the disappearance of 4] technology and primitive economics and 5] applied anthropology, in favour of 1] elements of (introduction to) cultural (social) anthropology and 5] systematic social anthropology. The dropped topic 4] technology and primitive economics makes a return in the single honours anthropology degree introduced in 1957, the courses for which are identical to those offered in the diploma in anthropology, as follows: 1] general anthropology: primitive technology and economics, 2] general anthropology: physical anthropology, 3] general anthropology: prehistoric archaeology, 4] regional studies, 5] social anthropology: social control, 6] social anthropology: kinship, 7] social anthropology: theory and method of social anthropology, and 8] social anthropology: selected social anthropological subject. There are minor switches of content between papers 1] and 3] in 1959, as follows 1] general anthropology: economics of primitive societies and 3] general anthropology: primitive technology and prehistoric archaeology, the degree otherwise remaining the same until 1963 and the split of the University in two. In anticipation of the split, the joint anthropology geography degree courses in Durham are specified separately and feature some independent changes in 1962, as follows: 1] elements of cultural anthropology, 2] physical anthropology (inc. practicals), 3] regional studies, 4] method and theory of social anthropology, and 5] special topics; with further changes in 1964: 1] anthropology: social change, 2] physical anthropology (inc. practicals), 3] anthropology: regional studies, 4] anthropology: social organisation, and 5] anthropology: special topics.

<sup>65</sup> The *Directory* also has under research resources the "Gertrude Bell Collection of Middle Eastern archaeology and travel", which comprises the papers and photographs of the redoubtable explorer-cum-archaeologist, whose family came from Washington in County Durham and whose half-sister presented them to Armstrong College in 1926 with further papers later. Bell travelled extensively in the Arab world and British intelligence recruited her in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, as it did T. E. Lawrence, for her knowledge of the region and its people.



The listing of technology as a course indicates how the Department lagged behind social anthropology developments elsewhere. Although if it had kept the course in the curriculum it would have subsequently become cutting edge again with the re-emergence of material culture studies as a major field of study in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. As it was, the Durham Department was the first to re-introduce a course in material culture for undergraduates in the mid-1980s. During much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropology ceased to have any interest in the study of material culture, which fell to archaeology predominantly, predictably focussing on ancient artefacts largely. An intriguing Durham character in this respect was Wilfred Dodds, a technician in the Archaeology Department and talented illustrator who contributed to several publications. Ethnographic artefacts fascinated him and several museums in the region have his notes and drawings of objects in their ethnographic collections (Jessop nd.a). He was a keen collector of artefacts from around the world, particularly of weapons, and for someone in his position amassed a surprising collection of some 1,300 objects by scouring antique shops and auctions in the region. He bequeathed the collection to the Oriental Museum and today it comprises a valuable part of the Anthropology Department's ethnographic collection.

#### *The Orient and Museums.*

Other collections in Durham led to further developments that chime in with the provisionality of anthropology. The University considered the objects in these collections (that were not in its aforementioned Museum) to fall under the rubric of Oriental studies, before 'orientalism' became shorthand for critiques of Western colonialism. Arguably, such studies appeared on the curriculum from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a Readership in Hebrew, occupied by Temple Chevallier (in 1835), a prominent Durham character (Fowler 1904:132-135),<sup>66</sup> and subsequently the establishment of a Professorship of Hebrew, occupied by Henry W. Watkins (in 1880), a Durham archdeacon (Whiting 1932:142-43).<sup>67</sup> While both men were taken up with biblical studies, mentioning their names in the context of a history of anthropology is no more bizarre than citing as intellectual ancestors Robertson Smith, Frazer or Jevons, as we regularly do. The study of non-European languages and cultures really took off with the appointment in 1920 (until 1930) of the distinguished Islamic scholar, Alfred Guillaume (1888–1965) to the Chair of Hebrew and Oriental languages, when the University became a leader in Arabic language and literature studies. While he is best known for his Penguin book *Islam* (1954), Guillaume completed (with T. Arnold) the first edition of *The legacy of Islam* (1931) while at Durham and his book *The traditions of Islam* (1924), together with a translation of al-Shahrastani's Muslim philosophy and theology (1931).

The appointment of Thomas William Thacker (1911-1984) as Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages in 1941 (until 1977) was significant for future museological developments, as he maintained that students needed to appreciate the cultures responsible for the languages and literatures they studied, and teaching needed cultural collections; although he was himself a linguist with an interest in verbs (Thacker 1954). He held that "An Oriental School which aims to teach the cultural background of the oriental peoples must have a museum at its disposal",<sup>68</sup> and he set about acquiring a suitable collection. The acquisition of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Northumberland's Collection of antiquities from Egypt and the

<sup>66</sup> According to Fowler (1904:134), one of Chevallier's students, who was subsequently appointed in 1872 the University's first lecturer in Hebrew, commented that: "He was an excellent Hebrew scholar of an old-fashioned type".

<sup>67</sup> The University was not particularly supportive of the early establishment of such studies, having Chevallier concurrently hold the Chair in Mathematics along with the Hebrew Readership, even though the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had recommended as early as 1841 the founding of a "Professorship of Hebrew and Oriental Languages" (Fowler 1904:34).

<sup>68</sup> Quoted at 'About the Oriental Museum: History of the Museum' @ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum/about/history/>

Near East in 1949 was a significant moment, which the University initially housed in two rooms in Hatfield College (one as a display room and the other a store). The next major acquisitions were the Chinese collections of Malcolm MacDonald (onetime Chancellor) and Sir Charles Hardinge, which resulted in part from the interest generated by an exhibition of Chinese bronzes in Cosin's Library to mark the Queen's coronation in 1953 and an exhibition the following year of Chinese books and textiles, both organised by Raymond Dawson (1923-2002) who was appointed Lecturer (subsequently Spalding Lecturer) in Chinese Religion and Philosophy in 1952 (until 1961<sup>69</sup>). His arrival marked the start of Chinese Studies, and he was responsible for the honours degree programme in Chinese started in 1958.<sup>70</sup> While in Durham he worked on teaching materials, which subsequently formed the basis of his widely used *Introduction to classical Chinese* (1968). Arguably, the School of Oriental Studies would have better suited Meinhard with his orientalist museum background but he apparently never made any connection,<sup>71</sup> the university's departmental structure likely partly responsible. Elsewhere, the foundation of the Sudan Archive in the University Library in 1957, following Sudanese independence, marked the start of another ethnographic collection of mainly North African artefacts, also largely overlooked by the anthropologists. Although primarily an archive of official and personal papers and photographs of Anglo-Egyptian Condominium colonial officers, missionaries and others, it includes a significant material culture assemblage.

The growth of the oriental collections and their importance led to plans for a purpose built research and teaching museum, which were brought to fruition by a generous Gulbenkian Foundation donation. The Gulbenkian Museum of Oriental Art and Archaeology, as then called, opened in 1960. The foundation curator was Philip Rawson (1924-1995), a prolific author and energetic visual scholar who did much to raise the museum's profile, publishing several accessible and widely read illustrated books on Asia -- notably India -- eleven of them during his time in Durham (Rawson 1961, 1963, 1966, 1967a & b, 1972, 1973a, b, c & d, and 1973 with Legeza). It was "the decade or so when Eastern art and mysticism gained tremendous public attention [and] Rawson was able to make major contributions in the field" (*Daily Telegraph* 1995). He was not only an oriental art scholar but an academic-cum-artist who produced many of his own figurative and abstract drawings and sculptures, which related to the cultural, aesthetic and philosophical theories he explored in his ground-breaking writing on art, which has influenced and challenged many artists, focussing broadly on technique, design and symbolism. He wrote two of these books while in Durham (Rawson 1969 and 1971), the former proving so popular that it led to a TV programme that Rawson presented (the BBC publishing his accompanying book *Seeing through drawing*), and the latter book inspired by the Gulbenkian's extensive collections of Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Persian pottery. His interest in music led him to chair the University's first Oriental music festival; albeit the popular sweep of his interests from fine art to philosophy unsettled some conservative academic colleagues. He thought participation necessary to learning and sought to draw students into his teaching through direct experience, seeing and touching things. Some recall, for instance, how he would mention a Chinese ceramic in the museum's collection with an erotic picture on it, knowing that searching for it would have students looking closely at case after case of pottery.

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<sup>69</sup> Archie Barnes (1931-2002) author of *Chinese through poetry* a book on classical Chinese poetry was subsequently appointed in 1961 lecturer in Chinese Language and Civilisation, retiring in 1984 due to ill-health.

<sup>70</sup> In the year that he came to Durham, Dawson also started as a crossword compiler for the *New Statesman*, under the name Setsquare, turning out a monthly cryptic crossword until the year he passed away.

<sup>71</sup> Even though it would have made a strong political ally in the academic tussles of the time, for in the mid-1950s Oriental Studies, together with Theology, was the largest department in Durham with thirteen academics on staff, two of them professors -- out of twenty Durham Colleges wide (Clarke 2005).

*The Reformulation of Durham Anthropology.*

The next appointment in anthropology occurred in 1958 with Eric Sunderland joining the Geography Department in Durham as a lecturer. Although no one knew at the time, it was to prove pivotal in the Department's subsequent history. He was a biological, or as he styled himself, a physical anthropologist who focused on human phenotype variation within and between populations. In his doctoral research, for instance, he surveyed hair colour in Britain (Sunderland 1954). Subsequently, he supervised and participated in research on the distribution of various human biological and cultural traits in several populations (e.g. Sunderland 1961; Sunderland and Rosa 1976; Mitchell, Cook and Sunderland 1977; Sunderland, Williams and Dennis 1981; Sunderland and Woolley 1982). He complemented the interests of his King's College colleagues. While social anthropology was dominant at the time, he cleaved to a view nearer to the dictionary definition of the discipline as 'the study of humankind', encompassing both the biological and the sociological aspects of human existence, as seen in the title of his inaugural lecture when promoted to a chair: 'Some bio-social aspects of anthropology' (Sunderland 1973b). It is also evident in the slim book based on his first year 'introduction to anthropology' lectures, which looks at "the emergence of man, in Africa, from a pre-human background and at his racial diversity . . . his social development . . . and peasant communities in which social changes . . . are now occurring rapidly" (Sunderland 1973a:102). It seemed for some years that he contributed to Durham anthropology being behind the times whereas it was forging, in exploiting the subject's provisionality, a truly interdisciplinary identity that now puts it in the vanguard with the broad study of humankind increasingly fashionable in the discipline. Not all colleagues saw it that way and there was some friction then and later with fashion conscious sociologically minded colleagues. According to one colleague, Sunderland's management of the tensions showed his political nous, playing one fractious academic off against another.

It was the aptitude that Sunderland had for academic politics and negotiating university bureaucracy -- which, unlike many colleagues, he enjoyed -- that was to prove particularly significant beyond petty academic squabbles. A few years after his arrival, King's College ceded, under the 'Universities of Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne Act 1963', to establish the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The result was a university chopped in two: the applied disciplines largely on the Tyne (such as agriculture, marine sciences, medicine, dentistry, architecture, fine art, metallurgy, mining and shipbuilding engineering) and academic ones on the Wear (such as classics, history, theology, oriental studies, archaeology, music, sociology and law) a split that is evident to this day. "We owe a large debt to Eric Sunderland in Durham today", as I comment in his obituary (Sillitoe 2010:21) because he was instrumental, deploying his considerable political skill, in securing anthropology on the Wear following the University's break up; although unfortunately he did not manage to obtain the Ethnographical Museum housed on the Tyne in the then Sydenham Terrace offices of the anthropologists (sometimes I wistfully imagine the aforementioned Brown Collection of Pacific artefacts as part of today's departmental ethnographic collections).

The battle for the Department was not hard fought with Meinhard slumbering into retirement and neither Sheddick nor Powell university politicians but rather irreverent cynics of academic wheeler-dealing. The splitting up of the University, while fateful was not final, with some colleagues maintaining connections and creating new ones too, such as Sunderland's interaction with Derek F. Roberts a population geneticist (Roberts and Sunderland 1973) who in 1965 established Newcastle's human genetics unit (subsequently Department of Human Genetics, Papiha 1996). And today there continue to be some anthropologists in Newcastle's School of Geography, Politics and Sociology who have ties to the Durham department. The attraction of academic administration to Sunderland is evident

in his subsequent career, serving for thirteen years, from 1971 until 1984, as Head of the Department of Anthropology and also as a Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Durham University, before leaving to become Principal of the University College of North Wales in Bangor (now Bangor University), being a fluent Welsh speaker, and occupying the rotating Vice Chancellorship of the University of Wales. Many colleagues remember him as an excellent committee chair and diligent bureaucrat, skills that he contributed to the Royal Anthropological Institute and the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, serving for several years as Secretary and subsequently from 1989 to 1991 as President of the former, and as Secretary General of the latter. While he secured the readership in anthropology for Durham, he had mixed feelings about it following the next appointment to the post.

In 1965 Philip Mayer (1910-1995) was appointed to the readership. He was also a German who had fled Nazi persecution,<sup>72</sup> and exiled in England registered for a doctorate in Oxford's History Faculty researching agrarian issues in Iraq,<sup>73</sup> notably the degraded irrigation systems. The decision was inadvertently to stand him in good stead when he applied for the Durham readership, which was then associated with the Geography Department that was building on interests in Middle East studies.<sup>74</sup> He came from South Africa having resigned as professor at Witwatersrand University after less than two years in the chair, which should perhaps have signalled something. While at Durham he insisted on being addressed as professor -- confusing some students whom he reproached for their hazy understanding of academic title etiquette. It indicated how he perceived the post to be below his status and perhaps said something about his personal insecurity given his exile experiences. Immediately after the 39-45 War, Mayer had lived among the Gusii speakers of Kenya as colonial government sociologist. These cattle-keeping savanna-fallow cultivators were swapping their staple millet crop by the mid 20th century for coffee and tea production, although Mayer maintained that their traditional lifestyle remained largely intact. Similar to his predecessor, he had no formal training in anthropology and he was heavily influenced by his Oxford association; particularly with the smooth-spoken Radcliffe-Brown whom he came to know well in South Africa subsequently.<sup>75</sup> Consequently, Mayer worked "very much within the anthropological paradigms of the time" (Beinart 1991:18), and published familiar accounts of an African segmentary lineage system cross-cut by age-sets, marriage legitimated by bridewealth exchange of livestock and people who subscribed to witchcraft beliefs (Mayer 1949, 1950, 1951a, 1951b, 1953, 1954). But it was on his work in the Xhosa-speaking township of East London in South Africa's Cape Province, published in *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, that his reputation depended, as "surely the most important anthropological work on South Africa published at that time" (Beinart 1991:21). It advanced understanding of urban-rural relations among migrant labourers under apartheid and how their social networks extended into the countryside, varying with their identity as either 'Red' traditionalists or

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<sup>72</sup> He told of brownshirts dragging him out of a court building when as a law student he was taking a State legal examination, denouncing him as a Jew oppressor (Beinart 1991:12).

<sup>73</sup> The interest in the Middle East stemmed from the period in the 1930s that Mayer spent in the Zionist community of Palestine, where he fled to from Germany via England, and where "Although he was strongly Zionist and even joined Hagana, the Jewish paramilitary force, he developed an interest in Arab society and politics" (Beinart 1991:13).

<sup>74</sup> These developments were driven by William B. Fisher, Head of Department (mentioned previously, footnote 50), author of a major textbook *The Middle East*, who had secured a large Rockefeller Foundation grant for Middle Eastern studies (the Department's 'Rockefeller Room' replete with Arab carpets and coffee pots was a legacy that impressed subsequent curious cohorts of students); he subsequently became the first Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies.

<sup>75</sup> On retirement, Radcliffe-Brown briefly occupied the chair at Rhodes University, and Mayer succeeded him there.

‘School’ modernists. Regardless of these academic credentials, recognised in 1967 with the award of the Royal Anthropological Institute’s Rivers’ Memorial Medal, things in Durham did not go well.

In addition to continuing with his work on South African urban life, his academic legacy from his time in Durham revolved around organising the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth’s 1967 annual conference on the topic of ‘socialisation’ and editing the resulting eighth volume in the Association’s now long established monograph series (Mayer 1970). The opportunity to build up a presence in South African studies with colleagues in other departments who had related interests was missed however, his time in Durham overlapping with several South African émigré scholars whose apartheid experiences informed their work: John Rex (1964-70), the foundation chair in sociology, widely read for his work on conflict theory and racial relations; Stanley Cohen (1967-72) and Gavin Williams (1967-75), lecturers in sociology, whose work on social theory focussed on politics, political economy, protest and deviancy; and Stanley Trapido (1965-70), lecturer in politics, who worked on the intertwined history of South Africa’s various social classes. But missing opportunities to forge academic relations was to prove less damaging than messing up personal ones. Mayer was, to paraphrase, a Prussian whose style was Prussian. His abrasive and intolerant behaviour made him unpopular. A colleague at the time recalled him as “aggressive with poor personal relations, a thoroughly unpleasant person”. He stirred up ill feeling, for instance, by reducing the gently-spoken departmental secretary to tears, and students ridiculed him by repeating with a heavy stentorian German accent “ma people, zer Guzii”, a phrase heard regularly in his lectures. These reminiscences chime in with Hammond-Tooke’s (1995:116-17) obituary comments that “his often tense relations with senior colleagues and peers at the various universities at which he taught . . . made him appear devious and manipulative”.

On the positive side, Mayer inadvertently promoted anthropology’s independence by accelerating the breaking of the discipline’s long association with Geography in both Durham and Newcastle, with the establishment of a single honours degree<sup>76</sup> and a Board of Studies<sup>77</sup> in Anthropology for the 1967-68 academic year. Relations between Mayer and William B. Fisher, the Head of the Geography Department and an Englishman whose style was also Prussian, were doomed from early on; as a former student and later senior colleague of Fisher recalls “In those days of authoritarian heads, he was the decision-maker . . . not consensual and not to be crossed” (Clarke 2005). Mayer crossed him and they predictably fell out. Against Fisher’s repeated directions and to his ire, Mayer often cut lectures or asked students to give them. According to a colleague at the time, “Fisher wanted shot of Mayer and so agreed to an Anthropology Board of Studies”, which shows how much Fisher disliked him, as an empire builder he willingly diminished his slowly growing academic empire.<sup>78</sup> Following the acrimonious divorce, the anthropologists moved to South End House on the corner of Elvet Hill Road, adjacent to the new Van Mildert College and on the opposite side of the college to the Gulbenkian Museum. On the negative side, relations in the newly reconstituted Anthropology Department were at a nadir,<sup>79</sup> which would cost Mayer his post. If you make

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<sup>76</sup> In the same academic year, the Newcastle University Calendar for 1967-68 notes that the honours degree in anthropology started in 1957 is to be discontinued and no further students to be admitted.

<sup>77</sup> Boards of Study first appear in the 1963-64 *University Calendar*, an aspect of the University’s reorganisation following it splitting in two.

<sup>78</sup> The University archive contains a testy note (Durham University nd.c.) that Fisher circulated informing persons to direct any queries about Anthropology to the new Board of Studies and not him in Geography.

<sup>79</sup> Anthropology has the dubious reputation of being the only Department ever to pass a vote of no confidence in the Chair of the Board of Studies (the Head of Department, who was Mayer at the time). The depth of animosity is evident in a memo (Durham University nd.c.) signed by William Wilder, David Brooks and Milada Kalab sent to the University complaining about Mayer’s highhanded behaviour in announcing at short notice his

many enemies, it is prudent not to give them ammunition against you, and his downfall came when, as rumour had it, there were discrepancies in research grant expenditure that obliged him to resign, initially referred to euphemistically as returning to South Africa on study leave. *The Consolidation of Durham Anthropology*.

The Department was fortunate in having Lucy Mair (1901–1986) agree to occupy the vacant readership for an interval, a formidable lady and respected teacher, whose experienced presence was invaluable in putting the Department back on an even keel, particularly helping to manage a full honours school of undergraduates and growing numbers of postgraduates. While the Department had appointed three lecturers by this time – Milada Kalab (1964), William D. Wilder (1966) and David Brooks (1968)<sup>80</sup> – the loss of a senior member of staff made covering the teaching and administration a challenge. The University awarded her an honorary degree as a mark of respect for her work and stepping into the breach. She had encountered anthropology and came under Malinowski's spell while lecturing in the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics in the late 1920s -- where the Director was William Beveridge who was her uncle and future stepfather.<sup>81</sup> She subsequently worked in Africa, with the Baganda people of Uganda, funded by an International African Institute Rockefeller fellowship supervised by Malinowski, her doctorate published as *An African People in the Twentieth Century* (1934), a standard ethnographic monograph of the time dealing with economic, political, kinship and religious organisation.<sup>82</sup> It also dealt with the impact of colonial policy, land tenure changes and missionary activity that foreshadowed her subsequent interest in social change and applied anthropology. Although she was strongly influenced by Malinowski, she did not take to micro-level fieldwork, which was the central plank in his anthropological revolution: "she said later that she had not enjoyed fieldwork . . . shy [she] must have found it stressful to ask others about what she regarded as their private affairs" (Colson 1986:22).

More comfortable with macro-level policy related matters, notably issues of social change under colonial regimes and later international development, Mair indomitably advanced applied anthropology when it was unpopular to do so. Her concern to represent 'native people' to bureaucrats and policymakers dates back to her early career working as Gilbert Murray's secretary-assistant on League of Nations affairs.<sup>83</sup> She taught courses for colonial, and subsequently national, administrators – as lecturer then reader at the LSE in colonial administration, and later applied anthropology. She was seconded for a spell to the School of Civil Affairs in Canberra, teaching Australian colonial administrators working in the Territory of Papua New Guinea, her subsequent book *Australia in New Guinea* (1948) drawing on her interactions there.<sup>84</sup> She also published several other books on social change, during the period that independent states replaced colonial regimes, again many accessible to students and interested public (see Mair 1957a, 1963 and 1969a), arguing that "it was

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intention to take leave imminently, and another communication from William Wilder complaining about the dire management of teaching responsibilities in the Department with off-hand changes undermining morale.

<sup>80</sup> Another member of staff in the 1960s was Judith E. Travers from Edinburgh (1962–66), a research fellow in anthropology who worked on Iran and also taught, who had left by this time.

<sup>81</sup> Her mother, as noted earlier (note 56), was also School Secretary, albeit regarding Mair's post there is "no record of any discussion about the propriety of that appointment" (Davis 2004).

<sup>82</sup> According to Middleton (1987:99) "She herself later thought it an inadequate book, an opinion typical of her modesty, but when compared to other monographs of the same period it is in fact a competent and instructive field study."

<sup>83</sup> She wrote her first book *The protection of minorities* (1928) during this time, dealing with rights related issues (summarising cases brought before the League and actions taken) that are central to anthropology to this day.

<sup>84</sup> Also noteworthy is that Gilbert Murray's brother Hubert was the long serving Lieutenant-Governor of Papua, who was sympathetic to ethnographic research informing colonial government decisions relating to subject populations, employing government anthropologists.

essential to know the social organization of developing peoples, to be able to assess the likely consequences of intervention” (Davis 2004). But unflinching in her intellectual honesty, she increasingly expressed ambivalence at the idea of ‘applying’ anthropology “when what we mean is indicating the social context in which knowledge from some other field is to be applied” (Mair 1969:3), and in her last book on the subject, with the complexity of post-colonial development evermore apparent, she gives a wry view of the limitations of anthropology that “can more often offer warnings than advice” (1984:11).

The subtle shifts in these arguments may have passed most students by but Mair saw to it that they understood the main points. While her lectures were not lively, they commanded attention, as she was widely recognised as the author of several accessible student-friendly books, such as the bright yellow paperback *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* (1965) familiar to most students at the time. While in Durham she completed *Marriage* (1971), the second of her widely read Pelican paperbacks (the first was *Primitive Government* (1962)), and she worked on *African societies* (1974), chapter drafts of which comprised her 3<sup>rd</sup> year ‘Regions’ lecture course. She had the respect of even the most rebellious sit-in ‘60s students, having a fierce reputation and not tolerating sloppy work or loose argument. You went to a tutorial unprepared once only, the trauma of facing her ferocious intellect ignorant of the topic unnerved the brashest of slackers. “Intellectually she was formidable, as all knew who had the temerity to engage her in argument” (Colson 1986:22). Her writing style was “lapidary” (Davis 1974), and she looked for the same precise and concise expression in student essays. “A characteristic of everything that she wrote was a simplicity and clarity of style. She had no patience with jargon and laboured qualifications . . . she wrote straightforwardly . . . and she expected other scholars to do no less” (Middleton 1987:101). She was somewhat ill at ease interacting with students outside lectures, displaying a contrary combination of shy and aggressive behaviour, a “social awkwardness” noted by many (Davis 2004), but those she saw trying to meet her high standards she encouraged and helped in her somewhat discomfited way: “To those fortunate enough to be allowed to know her . . . she gave unassuming kindness and generosity” (Middleton 1987:101).

The provinciality of the University was unattractive to Mair, even though she had family connections to Northumberland, albeit she spoke of her family as ‘awful’ (Davis 2004). She was a Londoner at heart (Colson 1986:22), and she may have stayed with the Department but for the distance of the commute.<sup>85</sup> (In term time she stayed in St. Aidan’s College staff accommodation, in vacations returning to her Greenwich home.) Although her interest in social change marked her off to some degree, “She was in her own mind first and foremost a social anthropologist” (Middleton 1987:100). She was particularly influenced by Malinowski and fiercely defended his work to students, particularly those reckless enough to suggest that it was passé, having “little patience with some of what she saw as intellectual fads” (Colson 1986:23).<sup>86</sup> Her caustic comments on the fashionable theories of the day, such as structuralism, amused and reassured confused students struggling to keep up with then current theoretical ideas. Her career spanned that part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when social anthropology was dominant in Britain and gave the provisional discipline of anthropology unusual coherence here. This no longer pertains in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The provisionality of anthropology has since resulted in fragmentation of the subject into a myriad sub-fields, such that it is difficult today to define the discipline. Other than to point out that it features the interdisciplinary study of humankind, which may correspond

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<sup>85</sup> Instead she joined the Department of Anthropology at the University of Kent part-time.

<sup>86</sup> Another sure way to fire her ire was to suggest that anthropology was the ‘handmaiden of colonialism’, for “she was infuriated by the charge that social anthropology had developed as the tool of colonial regimes” (Colson 1986:23).

with the dictionary definition of the subject but perhaps implies that it is not really a discrete discipline. After all, this designation encompasses all of the social sciences and a goodly part of the humanities too. Whatever, the Durham Department is a leader in interdisciplinarity, making it one of the most vibrant and largest departments in the country. It is arguably due in part to its provincial northern status, sufficiently distant from southern intellectual metropolises to have resisted their setting of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's sociological academic fashion trends. The appointment of some independently minded faculty contributed too, as recounted here, who were committed to the view that the discipline should encompass both the social and the biological dimensions of humanity. We are currently living in what seems a confused intellectual period, to me as a participant anyway, although with the elapse of time it may make sense to those in the future who can take a historical perspective and hopefully will continue the narrative from here. They will show that Durham Anthropology has furthered the integration of social and biological approaches to the study of humankind, continuing a tradition that is evident throughout its history. It gives the subject here a distinctive Northumbrian character, featuring advances that continue to parallel those of the University generally, today in their vitality.

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